





The Marne Miracle

Illustrating the Principles of War

By Col. William K. Naylor, G. S.
United States Army

Formerly Director of the General Staff School
and a Director of the Army War College

Washington:
United States Infantry Association
1923

Copy 2

II 545
M₃N₃
Copy 2

Copyright 1923 by
United States Infantry Association



MAY -4 '23

© Cl A 711477

Contents

	Page
Preface	5
Bibliography	7
Foreword	9
The German Plan	19
German Order of Battle and Plan of Concentration	29
The French Plan	35
The British Plan.....	47
The Belgian Plan	51
The Operations	53
Charleroi and Mettet	73
Mons	83
The Retreat from Mons to the Sambre	89
Le Cateau	97
St. Quentin-Guise	101
Crossing the Marne	109
Battle of Nancy	119
Battle of the Ourcq and Marne	127
The Decisive Day	153
The Von Heutsch Incident	163
The Retreat	171
Conclusions and Final Comments	175

Sketches

General Map

Sketch No. 1—Initial Concentration.

Sketch No. 2—Attack on Liege.

Sketch No. 3—From Mons and Charleroi to St. Quentin and Guise.

Sketch No. 4—Battle of the Ourcq-Marne, and Battle of Nancy—September 6, 1914, 6 p. m.

Sketch No. 5—Position of the Armies on the morning of September 9, 1914.

Preface

This battle is referred to by the French as the "Miracle of the Marne," by the Germans as the "Tragedy of the Marne Basin." The former appellation is preferred since the Allied victory seems to have been gained because of Divine intervention, for on the 9th of September there were fully as many reasons for the Allies to withdraw as there were for the Germans.

This study does not pretend to be a final analysis of the Battle of the Marne, nor of the preliminary movements leading up to that battle. From the meagre amount of information that is available, the author has been able to check the movements to his own satisfaction as they were probably made. The accompanying sketches also were prepared by the author, and bear only the names of places mentioned in the text. Any conclusions drawn are based upon the best available data. Since the Battle of the Marne, a great many German writers have been making contributions; and inasmuch as they all seem to agree upon the salient points, it seems but just to give full credit to their versions.

There can be no question that a great injustice was done Lieutenant Colonel von Hentsch by attempting to make him the scapegoat of the Marne.

In judging the actions of von Kluck, one will make a grave error in interpreting his orders unless one takes into consideration all the orders that were issued to him, commencing with the 17th of August. It will be noted in reading these orders that there is one expression common to all of them that is "to afford the necessary flank protection for the armies." That was undoubtedly von Kluck's mission, and that is wherein he failed if at all.

Bibliography

In preparing this study, extensive quotations have been made from the following works: "Die Marne-schlacht 1914" and "Deutsche Heerfuhrung im Marnefeldzug 1914," by A. Baumgarten-Crusius; "The March on Paris 1914," by von Kluck; "Mein Bericht Zur Marneschlacht," by General Fieldmar-shal von Bulow; "Erinnerungen an der Marnefeld-zug 1914," by General and Baron von Hausen; "Der deutsche Generalstab im Vorbereitung und Durch-fuhrung des Weltkrieges," by von Kuhl; "Bis zur Marne," by von Tappen; "Marneschlacht und Tan-nenberg," by von François; "Maubeuge, Aisne and Verdun," by von Zwell; "von Ludendorff's Own Story;" "Out of My Life," by von Hindenburg; "My Memoirs," by von Tirpitz; and many other German writers and participants. Extensive quotations and verifications have also been made from the works of General Maurice, entitled "Forty Days in 1914;" "Germany in Defeat," by de Souza; "Gallieni parle," by Gallieni; "Military Operations—France and Bel-gium 1914," by Edmonds; "1914," by Viscount French; Nelson's History of the War; "The French Plan 17;" "The Briey Investigation;" "The Pomp of Power," Anonymous; "Military History of the World War," by Frothingham; "Belgian Gray

Book;" "English Blue Book;" "History of the World War," by Simonds; Repington's "First World War, 1914-1918;" "Le Plan de Campagne de Française;" "Les Archives de la Grande Guerre;" Laurenzac's "Account;" Brossard's "Le Secret de la Frontiere;" "Histoire de la Guerre, 1914-1915," by Cornet; "Les Erreurs de haut Commandment," by Percin, and many others. To all these writers, credit is given, and their works are recommended to the reader who desires to study this campaign in more detail.

NOTE: It must be remembered that many French military papers, including plans, etc., were destroyed by the French Government in August, 1914.

Foreword

It is not the purpose of this study to go into a discussion of the causes of the World War, nor who was responsible for starting it, since were that done this book would be prolonged to a tiresome extent, and would be off the subject.

In looking for an alibi for the Germans and trying to find a reason for their defeat, one is prone to attribute it to the defective plan of von Moltke and to think that had the Germans followed out the von Schlieffen plan they would have prevailed.

With reference to the plan of von Moltke, a condition confronts us, for it was actually tried, or at least an attempt was made to try it, and it failed. The other plan was never tried, so it is still in the realm of theory, and admirers of that plan can content themselves with thinking that had it been tried, it would have succeeded.

It might have succeeded, and again it might have failed. Who can tell? It must be admitted, however, that the von Schlieffen plan looks considerably better than the plan of von Moltke, for it was simpler and easier of execution, but the failure of Germany was due in great part to many other causes than a defective plan, for a plan alone never wins a war.

Germany's failure to win in 1914 cannot be attributed to the inefficiency of her fighting force,

for no troops could have marched and fought better than they. Where, then, lay the fault? In detail, it will be disclosed by a study of the text with the accompanying sketches.

As a preliminary, reference is made to an extract from "Die Marneschlacht 1914," by Baumgarten-Crusius, which indicates wherein the major difficulty lay.

"The causes of the Marne disaster do not lie, however, exclusively in a single person, they lie in the autocratic imperial power of the 25 years preceding the war."

The vainglorious megalomaniacal Kaiser, whose pride and vanity made him consider himself the All Highest and junior partner "*mit Gott*" and most learned in all subjects, would not tolerate those minds who at times would not go along peacefully with his. "But you must obey orders." "You are too independent by nature," he said to von François.¹

"Is it any wonder then," says Baumgarten-Crusius, "that 'iron heads,' men who went their own way, even contrary to orders and 'higher and the highest wishes' had become impossible in the Army? 'Hindenburg disappeared, Ludendorff had to leave the General Staff.'² 'Why should they be annoyed

¹ "Marneschlacht und Tannenberg," von François, p. 177.

² Ludendorff when relieved from Operations (same as G-3) was assigned to the command of the 39th Fusiliers at Dusseldorf, later he was assigned to command of a brigade at Strassburg and at the outbreak of war he was assigned as Oberquartiermeister of von Bulow's II Army.

with such strong characters?' 'Only no strong utterances, disturbing to the internal peace. This was the watchword of the Royal Prussian Cabinet, of the General Staff and of the War Ministry,' etc."

From the above quotation, it would seem that positive characters were not wanted by the Kaiser in the seats of the mighty. Upon the retirement of Count von Schlieffen as Chief of the Imperial General Staff (1906), several names were suggested to the Kaiser as possible successors and from this group he chose von Moltke over the protest of the latter. Von Moltke was a man of "noble, aristocratic character, richly developed on the side of the heart, of deep, tender, almost weak sensibility, full of unselfishness and modesty; he was free from personal ambition." He was not in good health and his physical condition reacted upon him, causing him to brood, to be over-pessimistic and look on the dark side of things. He went to Carlsbad twice during the exhausting period of tension before the outbreak of the war. It is said of von Moltke: "He knew how to handle the Kaiser more skillfully and better than anyone else, especially in regard to renouncing startling personal interference."

There is a story to the effect that one of the reasons that the Kaiser selected von Moltke was on account of his name, thinking that the name von Moltke in the minds of other nations might recall Count Helmuth von Moltke of 1870 and act as a bogey. It must be borne in mind that the Chief of the

Imperial General Staff was really the Army Commander; and when we imagine von Moltke in that capacity, we see that he did not possess the self-confidence, the fiery spirit, the strong nerves, and the force of character necessary for command.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the plans and operations of the respective armies, the reader's attention is called to certain accounts of incidents in connection with this campaign which are exaggerations if not inaccuracies.

For example: Many writers claim that von Leman's stand at Liege saved France. Just what credit should be given the defenders of Liege is hard to determine, but clearly they and they alone did not save France. The stand made by the Belgians at Liege greatly contributed to the success of the British and French by delaying the German advance sufficiently long to enable these troops to concentrate and deploy for battle in the angle of the Sambre and Meuse.

Many accounts refer to the von Schlieffen plan as being the one carried out by the German Army. The following are a few illustrations:

"The plan of campaign which was inaugurated in August, 1914, was conceived by General Count von Schlieffen. . . . It was planned by him, in event of France not respecting Belgium's neutrality, or of Belgium joining France. On this assumption,

the advance of the German main forces through Belgium followed as a matter of course.”³

Von Tirpitz, in his book, “My Memoirs,” also refers to the plan as follows: “The Schlieffen plan of attacking through Belgium.” The following reference is taken from Frothingham’s “The Military History of the World War:” “The movement of these German armies had been turned to follow the Schlieffen plan of a wide envelopment sweeping through Belgium against the Allied left.” Maurice, in his book, “Forty Days in 1914,” in general terms refers to the plan as being that of von Schlieffen. All these writers have in mind the wide turning movement through Belgium which was the distinctive feature of the von Schlieffen plan, in fact the main feature.

In the plan carried out it was only one of several features.

Popular writers endeavor to picture the German Army as an overwhelming colossus; an Attiline horde; the last word in military efficiency; rushing in a resistless torrent over the weaker armies of Belgium, Great Britain and France.

This is absolute buncombe.

Let us analyze: Bear in mind that continental divisions are all about the same strength. In the French plan before the war, France figured that the Germans would be able to mobilize 25 active corps

³ von Ludendorff’s Own Story, p. 28.

and 35 to 40 Reserve and Ersatz (replacement) divisions, of which 3 or 4 corps would be sent to the Russian front with about double the number of Reserve and Ersatz divisions. This would leave 21 or 22 active corps and in the neighborhood of 28 Reserve and Ersatz divisions to be used in France. As a matter of fact, Germany had 22 corps and 13 Reserve corps plus 2 Reserve divisions on the West Front. To this must be added 10 cavalry divisions, 6 Ersatz divisions and 27 Landwehr brigades and certain heavy artillery and pioneer units. A total of 72 infantry divisions, 10 cavalry divisions, 6 Ersatz divisions and 27 Landwehr (second line) brigades.

We are only indirectly concerned with the East Front, so no strengths there are stated.

France estimated that she could have 22 active corps, with 15 or 16 reserve divisions, which would be increased by the Alpine corps when Italy declared her neutrality, and troops from Morocco, Algeria, Senegal, and Tunis would also be used on the front in France if the African Colonies were quiet. At the outset, France actually had 10 cavalry divisions, 45 active and 21 reserve infantry divisions. Great Britain sent at the outset 2 corps of two divisions each and a cavalry division. A fifth division joined before Le Cateau and a sixth just before the Marne. Belgium had 6 infantry and one cavalry divisions. The equivalent of 66 French, 6 British and 6 Belgian infantry divisions — total 78 infantry divisions.

France, in addition, had 10 cavalry divisions as shown, which with those of Great Britain and Belgium, brought that total up to 12. France also had about 6 Territorial divisions available at the outset.

Marshal Joffre stated that toward the end of August, 1914, the Allies had on the Western Front 83 infantry and 12 cavalry divisions opposed to a German force of 85 infantry and 10 cavalry divisions. Reginald Kann, in the *Revue de Paris* of July 15, 1919, counting only active and reserve divisions, estimates the strength of the German concentration in the west at 70 divisions, and this estimate agrees with the number of enemy units shown on the French official maps for August and September, 1914. It is certain that the Allies were at least equal in strength, and it is altogether probable that the Allied armies had a considerable superiority in numbers over the Germans throughout the first Marne campaign.

Recapitulation

	<i>Infantry</i> <i>Divisions</i>	<i>Cavalry</i> <i>Divisions</i>
Germany	72	10
Allies	78	12

Certain French writers give Foch credit for dealing the left wing of the II and right wing of the III German Armies the knockout blow at Fere Champenoise, that started the retreat to the Aisne. As a matter of fact, Foch's IX Army had been driven

back all along the line, particularly on the right, when the German Army Command No. 3 was informed of the withdrawal of the II German Army, and was compelled, thereby, to fall back itself. When Foch countered with the 42d Division, the German retreat was already under way, so all the 42d Division did, at the most, was to speed up the Germans. Greater credit is due Marshal Foch for his indomitable spirit and his unwillingness to admit defeat in the face of facts indicating the contrary. Marshal Foch's attitude aptly illustrates the aphorism; no one is defeated until he is willing to admit it.

Answering the Joffre-Gallieni dispute as to who is entitled to the credit for the Maunoury envelopment, all one can say is that Joffre conceived the idea and Gallieni saw the opportunity.

Finally, as to the von Hentsch incident, facts and investigation show that von Hentsch did not exceed his authority and order the retreat of von Bulow's II Army—he did not have to do so, since von Bulow did it himself and admits it in his own report.

Before commencing to trace the movements, the reader is cautioned to keep in mind that *the change* from the von Schlieffen plan to the von Moltke plan was all done prior to D day and H hour, and whatever vacillation was shown by the German High Command was with reference to carrying out the provisions of the von Moltke plan, which contemplated protecting everything and was not an attempt

to change from the von Schlieffen plan to the von Moltke plan at the eleventh hour, as so many writers would like to have us believe. As a matter of fact, von Moltke tried, about the 17th of August, to switch back from his plan to the plan of von Schlieffen.

Most all of the commanders, however, were indoctrinated with the von Schlieffen idea, which fact exerted a sub-conscious influence over them.

The preceding statement may seem gratuitous, but it is given for the reason that many writers give the impression that the reason for the German failure was that they had not the courage to carry out the von Schlieffen plan and at the eleventh hour lost their nerve and tried to switch to the von Moltke plan. As a matter of fact, this change from one plan to the other covered a period of eight or nine years in its evolution.

The German failure was not due to the defective plan so much as it was due to defective command and execution.

As Napoleon and Foch have said, everything is in the execution; so, had the Germans had a von Schlieffen in command in 1914, they would have won, von Moltke plan or no von Moltke plan.

The German Plan

The German plan provided that the bulk of the forces namely the I, II, III, IV, and V Armies consisting of 27 corps, seven cavalry divisions, reinforced by certain landwehr formations, was to advance through Belgium and Luxemburg into northern France. This advance was to be a wheel pivoting on the Metz-Thionville line.¹

The V Army, commanded by the German Crown Prince, which formed the left flank of these forces, was to rest its left on Thionville.

The task of protecting the left flank of the forces making the wheel was assigned to the VI and VII Armies, commanded respectively by Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria and General von Herringen, which were to operate in conjunction with the fortresses of Thionville and Metz and the Nied position. The latter was a fortified line constructed by labor troops along the Nied between Metz and the Saar and was to be garrisoned by a considerable number of landwehr brigades and by heavy artillery.

The fortress section Metz-Thionville was to be under control of the commander of the V Army and the Nied position under that of the Governor of Metz. This was a very unfortunate arrangement, as it proved later on, for the Germans.

The VI Army (five corps, four Ersatz divisions and the 3d cavalry corps of three divisions) was

¹ See General Map and Sketch No. 1.

to concentrate southeast of Metz in the area Courcelles-Saarburg-Sarreguemines; the VII Army (three corps, two Ersatz divisions and one reserve division) at Strassburg and on the Upper Rhine. The VII Army was to be placed under the orders of the commander of the VI Army, who was to advance with both armies toward the Moselle below Frouard and toward the Meurthe (river), with the object of containing the French forces concentrating there, so as to prevent their transfer to the French left wing. But if the French assumed the offensive with superior forces and advanced between Metz and the Vosges (Mountains), he was to retire and prevent an envelopment of the Nied position and the consequent threatening of the left flank of the main German forces by the French.

The VII Army was, in addition, to protect Upper Alsace and Baden while the strategic concentration was in progress. It was considered probable that the French would launch an offensive from Belfort. If this was made with inferior forces, the VII Army was to hurl it back "in order that the country would not be left at the mercy of every hostile enterprise." But if this offensive was made with superior forces, the VII Army was to retire on Strassburg and to the right bank of the Rhine, and the Governor of Strassburg was to hold the line *Fortress Emperor William II-Breusch position-Strassburg*.²

² Part of the line of defense of Strassburg.

The mission assigned to the commander of the VII Army in Upper Alsace and southern Baden was expressly designated as a transitory one. His most important task was to cooperate closely with the VI Army in carrying out the mission assigned to both armies in common. This cooperation was not to be deferred beyond the time when the VII Army might perchance be forced to retire on Strassburg and to the right bank of the Rhine.

These directives were based upon the expectation that the French might launch a vigorous offensive between Metz and the Vosges, coupled with a secondary advance from Belfort into Upper Alsace. It was expected that the German forces in Alsace-Lorraine would keep considerable French forces from joining the French left wing. The retirement of the VI Army in face of a vigorous French offensive in Lorraine, was to be in the nature of a retrograde movement toward the Saar, designed to draw the French on until they could be attacked from the north from Metz and the Nied position and from the south by the VII Army.

The transitory mission of the VII Army was by no means easy. If the French advanced from Belfort, it was impossible to determine immediately whether they did so with a large or small force. An advance by the VII Army on Mulhausen might prove a thrust in air and interfere with its cooperating with the VI Army in carrying out the principal mission assigned to both in common.

As soon as the left wing of the German Army had succeeded in accomplishing its mission on the left flank it was to be transported from that vicinity around to reinforce the right wing Armies. Rail transportation sufficient for transporting six corps was assembled in and about Strassburg for the accomplishment of this purpose from the very beginning.

The von Schlieffen and von Moltke Plans Compared

The principal difference between the von Schlieffen plan and the von Moltke plan is this: von Schlieffen expected with a powerful right wing, advancing through Belgium, to swing around and completely turn the French, his left flank being on a restricted defensive and falling back in the event of the French making a determined attack between Metz and the Vosges. In other words, enticing the French on with the left wing in order to make the movements of the right wing easier. The von Moltke plan contemplated pinning the French right to the ground by a strong offensive with the German left; that is, "To contain the French by advancing" or if the French advanced in force into Lorraine, for the VI Army, in that vicinity, to fall back, drawing the French after it, the latter then to be pinched off by an offensive from Metz and Alsace. By this activity von Moltke hoped to con-

tain superior French Forces in Lorraine, thereby weakening the French left.

To justify von Moltke's concentration of 23 divisions in Alsace-Lorraine, this condition had to result. Von Schlieffen, on the other hand, welcomed an advance into Lorraine in force, but if it did not come, his plan would not be vitally affected. As a matter of fact, Joffre turned the tables on von Moltke and with inferior numbers contained superior German forces in Lorraine.

It does not appear that the two plans were so dissimilar—their difference lay in distribution and execution. While von Moltke retained the idea, in general, of a great strategic turning movement through Belgium, he increased the German left wing instead of the right. The forces in Alsace-Lorraine were doubled, being eight corps, with certain war garrisons and landwehr troops.

“Von Schlieffen gave serious consideration to the participation of England in the war and, as far as I could learn, it was his wish to meet the English danger by occupying all northern France north of the Somme, in connection with the attack against the Allied Army. Then we would have been masters of the coastal strongpoint of Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne, could have carried a submarine warfare much more easily and efficiently and would have possessed a splendid base line and a good support for offensive movements in the partly swampy lowlands of the Somme. The economic side of the

war would also have received considerable support. It must be deeply regretted that General von Moltke dropped this sound strategically significant idea.” (von François.)³

There is considerable discussion among German Military writers on the subject of whether or not von Moltke actually made his right weaker in his plan than von Schlieffen did in his. It was not a question of strengths. It was a question of proportions. Von Ludendorff on this subject says: “But the proportion was altered to the disadvantage of the right wing. That is correct. I expressed my concern about this to Moltke on the General Staff tour. He considered, however, that he must protect Baden, and that the 15th and 14th Corps would still reach the right wing in time.”⁴

Von Ludendorff also states: “The substantial addition to the left wing was doubtless made because the Great General Staff had at least some inkling of the French plan, and someone in authority wished to spare German soil from the horrors of invasion.” If von Moltke knew of the French plan there is some slight extenuation in his thinking that he would find the French masses in Lorraine and that

³ When the German 4th Reserve Corps passed through Amiens on August 31st, 1914, it was but 50 kilometers from the coast.

⁴ Both plans contemplated shifting the 15th and 14th Corps around to the right and railroad trains were massed at Strassburg for that purpose. When the shift was finally made, it was too late.

he could pin them to the ground by hitting them such a hard tactical blow that they would find it impossible to withdraw, and thereby the movements of the German Right Wing would be facilitated.

It would seem from a study of the operations that what von Moltke intended to do was to strike the French in Lorraine a severe blow at the outset; nail them to the ground in a major tactical battle, and meanwhile, under cover of this, to carry out the von Schlieffen turning movement around the French left. Von Moltke always retained the idea of the turning movement through Belgium but, he made its success contingent upon the offensive operations by the left. The change in attitude of von Moltke on the 18th of August, may be explained as follows:

By the 17th, the French offensive in Lorraine had sufficiently developed to show its weakness.

The reconnaissances toward Verdun about August 12th and toward Dinant on August 15th, particularly the latter, developed strong French detachments. Also, reports arriving at German General Headquarters at Coblenz pointed to large French concentrations along and to west of the Meuse about Mezieres and Hirson. Von Moltke's "victory castle in Lorraine" collapsed like a deck of cards, and he decided, before it was too late, to revert to the von Schlieffen turning movement through Belgium as a main movement. So the IV

and V Armies were ordered to resume their former rôle as the left wing of the offensive mass and the VI and VII Armies were again given the responsibility of protecting the left flank of the wheel.

It looked for the moment as if von Moltke had definitely abandoned his Lorraine offensive idea, but not so. (For confirmation of this, see articles in the Army Quarterly, July, 1921, by Captain G. C. Wynnee, K.O.Y.L.I., page 316.)

This estimate reconciles the von Moltke concentration to the south with his order of August 17th to von Kluck which reads as follows:

"The main forces of the German Army are to advance through Belgium and Luxemburg into France. Their advance is to be regarded as a wheel pivoting on the area Thionville-Metz. Should Belgium offer resistance to the advance through its territory, Liege is to be taken by the II Army, so as to free the main roads which are covered by that fortress.

"For this purpose the 11th Infantry Brigade of the 3d Corps and the 14th Infantry Brigade of the 4th Corps (I Army) have been placed under the orders of the general commanding the 10th Corps. As soon as the 9th Corps, temporarily allotted to the II Army, has moved forward, the I Army is to advance toward Aix-la-Chapelle.

"When Liege has been taken and as soon as the I and II Armies are in position on the roads of advance level with Liege, the general advance of the

main forces will be ordered by the Supreme Command." etc.⁵

From a careful study of the General Staff maps, on which are indicated the movements of the German troops from day to day, one notices two distinct concentrations—one to the South toward the Lorraine frontier, and the other to the North toward Liege. These maps were kept from day to day and show all the movements in detail. A glance at the map indicating the movements on August 17th shows the shifting of the troops toward the North, whereas prior to that time the center of gravity was toward the South. This incident confirms one in the belief that about August 17th von Moltke discovered that the main French forces were not in Lorraine and tried to make the wide turning movement through Belgium the main operation. That explains the order to the assault wing which uses the expression, "the main forces of the German Army are to advance through Belgium and Luxemburg into France."

Summary

The plan as actually executed was to turn the strong French Eastern fortified line by an envelopment through Belgium and Northern France with a major tactical battle by the left wing in Lorraine to contain the French masses in that vicinity. After August 17th, a reversion to the main idea of the

⁵ "The March on Paris, 1914," von Kluck, pp. 9-10.

von Schlieffen envelopment pivoting on the Thionville-Metz line, and later, after the French Lorraine offensive had failed, a vigorous offensive by the German left against the Gap of Mirecourt to facilitate this envelopment by the right.

German Order of Battle and Plan of Concentration

The German concentration march was completed on August 16th.

I Army

Composition: The I Army under General von Kluck consisted of the 2d, 3d, 4th and 9th active Corps; the 3d, 4th, and 9th Reserve Corps;¹ the 2d Independent Cavalry Corps consisting 2d, 4th and 9th Divisions; three Landwehr Brigades; four battalions of Heavy Artillery; one Pioneer Regiment.

Concentration Area: Space back of Aix la Chapelle.

Objective: The section of the Meuse north of Liege.

II Army

Composition: The II Army under "Generaloberst" von Bulow consisted of the Guard, 7th and 10th active Corps; the Guard, 7th and 10th Reserve Corps; the 1st Independent Cavalry Corps consisting of the Guard and the 5th Cavalry Divisions; two Landwehr Brigades; four Howitzer Batteries;

¹ The 9th Reserve Corps did not arrive until after operations began being held in the north to meet the reported landing of the 80,000 Russians—the 9th active Corps on August 16th, passed from the II to the I Army.

one-10 c.m. gun Bn.; two Heavy Coast Artillery Mortar Batteries and two Pioneer Regiments.²

Concentration Area: On the left of the I Army.

Objective: Its objective was the Belgium Section of the Meuse south of Liege. The preponderance of heavy guns was for the purpose of fortress reduction. It was the main striking force of the assault wing.

III Army

Composition: The III Army under General and Baron von Hausen, ex-Minister of War of Saxony³ consisted of the 11th, 12th, and 19th active Corps, the two latter being Saxon Corps; the 12th Reserve Corps (Saxon); one Landwehr Brigade; two Howitzer Batteries; one Pioneer Regiment.⁴

² The Guard Reserve Corps was withdrawn for service on the East Front after Namur, August 26th.

³ There is a story published by some to the effect that the Saxon Army and Hausen were not in the original contemplated line, but were after-thoughts. This is entirely incorrect. The story gained credence from the fact that Baron von Hausen in his book on this campaign gives a copy of the order placing him in command and the late date creates the idea that he, Hausen, and his army were not contemplated at first. It was the practice in the German Army to reserve formal notification to prospective Commanders of Armies until mobilization had been ordered and, while commanders might have had a pretty good idea as to their assignments, they were not officially certain until they got their letters of assignment. As a matter of fact, all Army Commanders were similarly notified, but Hausen was the only one who, to date, has published his letter of assignment in a book, as far as known.

⁴ The 11th Active Corps was withdrawn with the Guard Reserve Corps for service on the East Front after Namur, August 26th.

Concentration Area: Assembled in the space about Prüm.

Objective: The Meuse on both sides of Dinant.

Cavalry Corps

The two Independent Cavalry Corps, No. 2 on the right and No. 1 on the left, under the Cavalry Generals von der Marwitz and von Richthofen,⁵ respectively covered the front of Armies I to III.

IV Army

Composition: The IV Army under Duke Albrecht von Württemberg consisted of the 6th, 8th and 18th Active Corps; the 8th and 18th Reserve Corps; one Landwehr Brigade; two Howitzer Batteries and one Pioneer Regiment.⁶

Concentration Area: Joining the III Army on the south and to the north of Treves.

Objective: Northern Luxemburg.

V Army

Composition: The V Army under the German Crown Prince consisted of the 5th, 18th (Württemberg) and 16th Active Corps; 5th and 6th Reserve Corps; 33d Reserve Division (Metz); 4th Cavalry Corps (3d and 6th Divisions); five Landwehr Brigades (seven others were in the Nied position); four Heavy Howitzer Batteries; and two Pioneer Regiments.

⁵ Father of the Ace.

⁶ The 6th Active Corps passed to the V Army, August 28th.

Concentration Area: In the space between Treves and Thionville.

Objective: To turn to the left around the pivot Thionville with the right wing from Bettenburg to Florenville.

VI Army

Composition: The VI Army under Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria consisted of the three Bavarian Active Corps and the 21st Active Corps; 1st Bavarian Reserve Corps; 3d Cavalry Corps consisting of the 7th, 8th, and the Bavarian Cavalry Divisions;⁷ Guard, 4th, 7th and 8th Ersatz Divisions (eleven Brigades); six Landwehr Brigades; four Battalions of Heavy Artillery and two Pioneer Regiments.

Concentration Area: In the space between Metz and the Vosges.

Mission: See VII Army.

VII Army

Composition: The VII Army under "Generaloberst" von Herringen consisted of the 14th and 15th Active Corps; 14th Reserve Corps; one Reserve Division (Strassburg); 19th (Saxon) and the Bavarian Ersatz Divisions (six Brigades); and two Landwehr Brigades.

⁷The 8th Cavalry Division, Saxon, was transferred to the East Front the latter part of August.

Concentration Era: In the Strassburg Area and south of it.

Mission: To the VI and VII Armies, with the Crown Prince of Bavaria as the Commander-in-Chief, was assigned the task of "advancing against the Moselle below Frouard and the Meurthe in order to detain the French troops assembled there and to prevent their transfer to the left wing of the French Army."

Summary

The Ersatz Divisions assigned the respective armies arrived on or after August 18th and 20th. It will be noted that none of these Ersatz organizations were placed in rear of the assault wing. Von Schlieffen contemplated having them in rear of right wing for replacements, etc.

The German High Command went to Coblenz on August 16th, the day when the railroad transportation of the Western Army came to an end. The rail movements of mobilization and concentration of the Armies worked without the slightest friction.

The Germans contemplated a vigorous offensive, in fact the spirit of the offensive was a habit of thought with the German Army and that spirit permeated it in every department except the High Command where it was thought that it existed in fact whereas it existed only in fancy. The offensive spirit and the desire of von Moltke to be safe everywhere were inconsistent. History shows that com-

manders with the true offensive spirit, after estimating the situation to the best of their ability, have come to a clear cut decision and then have stuck to that decision meanwhile evaluating subsidiary dangers to their own satisfaction and, after making what seemed to them to be reasonable arrangements to meet these dangers, have concentrated their whole attention on their main activity.

Napoleon's 1805, 1806 and 1809 campaigns, and Lee's 2d Manassas Campaign are good illustrations.

Moltke did not have the true offensive spirit.

The French Plan¹

The French objective was the Main German Army. Joffre stated at the Briey Inquiry, in response to the question as to why that valuable region had not been seized that "it was impossible" since the German Main Army was the objective.

The French Plan, called Plan 17, contemplated the offensive as shown by the following extract therefrom: "It is the Commander-in-Chief's intention to advance all forces united to the attack of the German Armies." The action of the French Armies was to be developed into two main actions as follows: 1. On the right, in the country between the wooded district of the Vosges and the Moselle below Toul. 2. On the left north of the line Verdun-Metz.

These two operations were to be closely connected by forces operating on the Hauts de Meuse and in the Woevre.

Before passing, it is desired to call attention to this illustration of the Principle of the Objective—the first principle of strategy. The hostile main army is the objective. The French, as much as the Germans, were also indoctrinated with the principle of the offensive. In order to be true to the offensive spirit and retain the initiative, the French main advance was against and into a geographical

¹ General Map and Sketch No. 1.

area. Not on account of any economic value of that area but because, by moving in that direction, it was estimated they would strike the Main German Army. They advanced in the decisive strategical direction for had the attacks by the I and II Armies been successful the Germans in Belgium and Luxemburg would have had to pause until this threat at their communications was removed, and might have been forced to fall back to assist in meeting it.

The French Plan contemplated two eventualities:

1st.—Operations limited to the territories of the two belligerents.

2d.—Operations extending also into the neutral territories of Luxemburg and, in particular, Belgium.

Whether or not the second eventuality should become an actuality depended upon the action of Germany, for France did not contemplate a violation of the neutrality of either Belgium or Luxemburg.

Whichever eventuality materialized, the actions of the I, II, and III French Armies were to be identical.

The V Army was to be the maneuver wing, but in case of the first eventuality, it was to be prepared for a strong offensive against Thionville (Diedenhofen).

In case of the second eventuality, the V Army was to move northward for an advance into Belgium-Luxemburg by way of the Neufchateau and Floren-

ville District. It will be seen from this that the French did not expect much German effort west of the Meuse. In either of the two eventualities there was to be echelonment in depth to the left rear.

The 4th Group of the Reserve Divisions (GDR) billeted in the Bourgogne-Vervins-Sissone Area on the left was to form a part of the Mass Maneuver in rear of the left.

The Sordet Cavalry Corps, consisting of the 1st, 3d, and 5th Divisions, in the first eventuality was to cover the left of the 2d Corps, left corps of the V Army advancing from Montmedy.

In the second eventuality, it was to move into Belgium.

Should the second eventuality materialize, the IV Army in reserve was to pass from the second to the first line between the V and III Armies prepared to advance toward Arlon.

France figured that at the outset she would have to meet Germany single handed. She did not contemplate that Russia could contribute very much during the early stages. In this she calculated erroneously, for Russia, quite contrary to the expectations of all, including the Germans, advanced rapidly into East Prussia which caused von Moltke to make that unfortunate switch of the Guard Reserve Corps, 11th Army Corps and 8th Saxon Cavalry Division to the East front thereby relieving

the pressure to that extent against the Allies on the West front.²

There was also a rumor that the Russians were to land about 80,000 men off the north coast of Germany which resulted in holding the 9th Reserve Corps in that locality until the rumor was exploded.

France had an understanding with Great Britain whereby the latter agreed to assist France in the event of Germany being the aggressor and violating Belgium's neutrality. Just what form this assistance would take, and when and where troops would land if sent, was not written into the agreement, but it was generally understood that if an Expeditionary Force were sent to the Continent it would take position on the left of the French being concentrated in the area about Cambrai.

As to Belgium, France had agreed to assist her, but no definite plan for cooperation between the armies of the two countries had been determined upon.

France was not entirely sure as to the attitude of Italy in event of War with Germany and so, as a part of her plan, left the Alpine Corps in the Alps to await developments. France must have been reasonably sure as to the Italian attitude in event of war as evidenced by the leaving of but one corps to oppose Italy. As soon as Italy declared her neutrality these troops were moved north.

² Tannenberg was over before the G. R. and 11th Army Corps even left Aix-la-Chapelle.

The British and Belgian plans will be discussed in detail later.

The French strategic deployment and general distribution to carry out her plan was as follows:

I and II Armies, to operate between the Rhine and the Moselle below Toul extending west via the Marne-Rhine Canal and the line Vaucoulers-Gondrecourt.

V Army, with the Cavalry Corps, north of the line Verdun-Metz.

III Army, to link up these operations.

IV Army, to be provisionally in the second line ready to move either to the south or to the north of the III Army. An alternative detrainment of this army was arranged.

Reserve Groups (GDR), one in the rear of each wing of the general front, were at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief.

FRENCH ARMY DISTRIBUTION AND MISSIONS

I Army (Dubail)

Composition: 7th, 8th, 13th, 14th, and 21st Army Corps; 6th and 8th Cavalry Divisions; five regiments of Heavy Artillery: First reserve group at Epinal (58th, 63d, and 66th Divisions) under G. H. Q.

Mission: To attack in the general direction Bacarat-Saarebourg-Sarreguemines.

Right of the main body to follow the crest of the Vosges.

Extreme right to advance into the plains of Alsace so that the right of the whole front would rest on the Rhine.

To be ready to move out on the 12th day of mobilization (in this case the 13th August).³

As a preliminary this army was, as soon as possible, to be in position to drive the enemy back from the eastern slopes of the Vosges north of the Schlucht.⁴

A special group of the I Army, consisting of the 7th Army Corps and the 8th Cavalry Division, was to move into Upper Alsace on orders given by the Commander-in-Chief any time after the 4th day of mobilization for the purpose of driving out any enemy who might "attempt to advance on the eastern slopes of the Vosges, and to assist the removal of that part of the population of Alsace that had remained faithful to the cause of France."

II Army (De Castelnau)

Composition: 9th, 15th, 16th, 18th, 20th Army Corps; 2d and 10th Cavalry Divisions; one regiment and 17 batteries of Heavy Artillery; Second Group of Reserve Divisions (59-65-70).

Mission: To attack in the general direction of

³ The first day of mobilization was August 2d.

⁴ A brook running west to east through Colmar.

Chateau Salins-Saarebruck. At first to occupy covering positions along the front Luneville-Grand Couronné de Nancy and from this line to advance on the 12th day of mobilization.

The Group of Reserve Divisions to detrain north of Nancy to oppose hostile operations from Metz and assure protection of the left flank of the II Army.

III Army (De Ruffey)

Composition: 4th, 5th, 6th Army Corps; 7th Cavalry Division; one regiment and ten batteries of heavy artillery; 3d Group of Reserve Divisions (54-55-56).

Mission: Connecting link between the two main operations.

To drive back on Metz and Thionville any hostile advance coming from that direction and be prepared to invest Metz.

Reserves and Heavy Artillery to protect the Hauts de Meuse.

To be prepared for a general offensive from the line Domvere en Haye-Vigneules-Hatton Chatel (near Vigneules)-Ornes on the 12th day of mobilization.

Certain Corps from the III and V Armies (namely the 4th and 2d) were charged with holding the Hauts de Meuse until completion of the mobilization.

IV Army (Langle De Cary)

Composition: 12th, 17th and the Colonial Army Corps; 4th and 9th Cavalry Divisions; three heavy batteries; 52d and 60th Reserve Divisions.

Mission: To be provisionally in the second line ready to march either to the South or to the North of the III Army. In event of the second eventuality, to move into the front line between the III and V Armies and attack toward Neufchateau.

V Army (Lanrezac)

Composition: 1st, 2d, 3d, 10th, 11th Army Corps; one cavalry division; 17 heavy batteries; 4th Reserve Group (51st, 53d, 69th Divisions) under G. H. Q.

Mission: If operations were limited to the territories of the two belligerents, the V Army was to be the maneuver wing prepared for a strong offensive beyond Thionville. If the operations extended into the neutral territories of Luxemburg and Belgium, then the V Army was to move northward into the angle formed by the Rivers Sambre and Meuse prepared for an advance into Belgium-Luxemburg via Neufchatel and the Florenville district.

In any event, to be deployed in depth and so disposed that it could march either to the east, or to the northeast and cross the line of the Meuse when ordered.

Grand Division of Reserve

1st Group on the Right.

1. To deploy facing east in the event of a violation of Swiss territory or

2. To move northward as a part of the I Army to cover its right and assist in the investment of Neuf Brisach and Strassburg.

4th Group on the Left.

To be able to deploy facing east or southeast or facing northeast so as to support the III, IV, or V Armies.

Cavalry Corps (Sordet)

Composition: 1st, 3d, and 5th Cavalry Divisions.

With the 4th GRD, to constitute the bulk of the mass maneuver of the left wing.

Mission: Responsible for the initial covering arrangements. Its function in either of the two eventualities has already been given. In the second eventuality, the 145th and 148th Infantry Regiments were to be under its orders as support and were to be used respectively to delay the hostile advance through Belgium-Luxemburg and, to occupy the Meuse bridges between Namur and the French frontier.

Summary

The idea gleaned from some writings is that the retirement of the French Armies was a part of the foregoing preconceived plan. That they, so to speak, of their own volition lured the Germans on

until a propitious time arrived to strike them a blow. A careful study of the Plan 17 shows that the French entertained no other idea than an offensive a l'outrance against the Main German Armies. The withdrawal to the south of the Marne was forced upon the French after they became convinced that their offensive would not succeed. In proof of this, one needs but read Joffre's order of the night of August 25th. The following instructions were issued to his Army Commanders after it had been seen that the contemplated offensive must be abandoned: "It being impossible to execute the offensive movement which had been perfected, the subsequent operations will be carried out in a manner to constitute on our left, by the united strength of the IV and V Armies, the British Army and new troops gathered in the eastern region, a massed force capable of taking the offensive, while the other armies will for the necessary time hold in check the efforts of the enemy." The point is that Joffre's original idea was an offensive but when it became apparent to him that such action was impossible, he quickly changed his plans and from then on he clearly intended falling back waiting for the propitious moment. It is clear that Joffre had not decided upon the Marne or any other place for this offensive, he was merely awaiting his time and Gallieni, in his conversation over the phone, "Coup de telephone," called Joffre's attention to the fact that von Kluck was turning southeast at Meaux and suggested that

the time had come. Naturally not having had a chance for a counter-attack before reaching the Isle of France, Joffre was bound to do it then, for a further withdrawal meant the loss of Paris with its resulting influences. Notwithstanding articles to the contrary, it is believed that the handling of the French retirement by Joffre will stand as one of the most brilliant illustrations of defensive warfare of this kind.

In the successive withdrawals, the French Army lost heavily, but it did not lose its morale, neither was it impaired to such an extent that it had lost the power to fight back when called upon. Seldom has there been a record of forethought on the part of a general that was so fully confirmed on the field of battle. As a further confirmation of this fact, that the withdrawal was involuntary, we have but to read the following extract from Viscount French's book "1914," giving an account of his conversation with Joffre at the latter's headquarters at Vitry le Francois on August 16th: "There was a complete absence of fuss, and a calm, deliberate confidence was manifest everywhere, I had a long conversation with the Commander-in-Chief, at which General Berthelot was present. He certainly never gave me the slightest reason to suppose that any idea of 'retirement' was in his mind. He discussed possible alternatives of action depending upon the information received of the enemy's plans and dispositions; but his main intention was always to attack."

Some writers, in proof of their contention that

France intended to stand on the defensive in event of a war with Germany, call attention to the fact that the French concentration was well back from the frontier. De Souza in his work "Germany in Defeat" Ist Phase, states the following: "The Germans derived some advantages by the orders given to the French covering troops to leave a space of ten kilometers (six miles) between themselves and the frontier. This measure, which was taken by the French Government in order to show its pacific intention and its strong desire for compromise and a peaceful solution, enabled the aggressors to seize some important positions along the frontier, etc." We might believe in these altruistic motives attributed to France were it not for the 1st paragraph entitled "General Situation of Plan 17" which reads: "From a careful study of information obtained it is probable that a great part of the German forces will be concentrated on the common frontier." This latter quotation gives the reason for the concentration back from the frontier—it was a cold blooded military proposition. One familiar with the concentration of the French Army in 1870 will recall that it was concentrated on the frontier but before the concentration was completed, the German armies struck the French armies and when they were through, the French were bottled up in Metz. France did not care to repeat the performance hence the concentration to the rear.

Also the Eastern fortified frontier line was a good one behind which and upon which to concentrate.

The British Plan

Secret agreements had been entered into between France and Great Britain whereby the latter promised her assistance if the Germans were the aggressors and violated Belgian neutrality.¹

Just what form this assistance would take was not specified. At first it was the protection of the French northern coast by the British Navy, but later it came in the form of troops in addition.

Doubtless the two General staffs had worked out a plan for the use of a British land force if it should come to the Continent. On this subject Repington states in volume I, page 14, of his work, "The First World War 1914-1918," the following: "The Anglo-French military conversations, officially began in January, 1906, continued uninterruptedly till the outbreak of war in 1914. They led to close co-operation of the British and French Staffs, and to the gradual working out of all naval, military, and railway projects for the delivery of our Expeditionary Force in France. It was first called the Striking Force."

Sir Edward Grey stated in his August 3d speech to the Commons: "I think it is due to the House to say that we have made no engagement yet with regard to sending an expeditionary armed force out of the country." Apparently this arrangement

¹ Le Plan de Champagne Français.

was made by Lord Kitchener with the French delegation that came to London about the 5th or 6th of August and left on the 10th.²

What the French counted on the British doing is pretty clearly shown by the extracts from GHQ notes.³

From these notes it appears that Joffre expected that the British would operate with him on the left flank of the general line which would have culminated in the British, in event of success, swinging around to the north into Belgium and connecting up with the Belgians as a result.

Under his orders, General French was restricted to a qualified defensive attitude and any offensive, unless accompanied by superior French forces, required previous approval by higher British authority. His instructions read:

“Therefore, while every effort must be made to

² The first troops of the expeditionary force left England on the 7th and on the 17th report was made public that the entire Expeditionary Force was in France.

³ “The British Army is requested to take station by August 21st to the north of the Sambre, so as to be able to march upon Nivelles, that is in the direction intermediate between Charleroi and Brussels—either to the left, or in rear and to the left of the 5th Army, according to the line of operations that shall have been determined for the army.” (Note No. 1119 from French GHQ, August 16th.)

“The cavalry corps will take station in the Eghezee-Tirlement region, by August 17th, in order to establish liaison between the Belgian troops at Namur and Louvain, and to check, at the same time, the enemy cavalry seeking to push forward toward the west.” (Note No. 1119 from French G.H.Q., August 16th.)

coincide most sympathetically with the plans and wishes of our Ally, the gravest consideration will devolve upon you as to participation in forward movements where large bodies of French troops are not engaged and where your force may be unduly exposed to attack. Should a contingency of this sort be contemplated, I look to you to inform me fully and give me time to communicate to you any decision to which His Majesty's Government may come in this matter," Kitchener.⁴

The order of battle of the British Expeditionary Force consisted of General Headquarters, a cavalry division commanded by Major-General E. H. H. Allenby, of five brigades with the necessary auxiliary troops. The First Corps, commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir Douglas Haig, of two divisions of three brigades each and the necessary auxiliary troops. The second Corps, commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir J. M. Grierson, who died on the train between Rouen and Amiens August 17, 1914, being succeeded by General Sir Horace L. Smith-Dorrien, of two divisions of three brigades each and the necessary auxiliary troops. The Third Corps, formed in France on August 31, 1914, under the command of Major-General W. P. Pulteney, of two divisions and the necessary auxiliary troops.

During the fighting on the Mons, the 19th Infantry Brigade, Line of Communication Defense

⁴ "1914"—Viscount French, page 15.

Troops, under Major-General L. G. Drummond, became combat troops. In addition to the above were the necessary army troops and lines of communication units.

The base was at Boulogne but was shifted during the course of the campaign to St. Nazaire with advance base at Le Mans. The Infantry was debarked at Boulogne while the mounted troops moved up the Seine and debarked at Rouen.

The Belgian Plan

The plan of Belgium depended greatly upon what her Allies did to assist her and when they did it. The defense of Liege by the Belgians was undoubtedly for the purpose of preserving the immunity of Belgium soil from invasion and to show Germany that she intended to resist from the outset.¹ The defense at Liege was also for the purpose of covering the Belgian concentration on the Geete. It also may have had a psychological significance in that it showed her prospective Allies that Belgium intended to do her part.

The Belgian Army was concentrated along the Geete, about 30 miles west of Liege and half way between that town and Brussels. The 3d Division was assigned the task of assisting the defenders of Liege while the 4th Division was to perform the same function with reference to the defenders of Namur. The entire Belgian Army consisted of 6

¹ "It was only on August 4th when its territory was effectively violated, that Belgium appealed to the armed assistance of the Powers that guaranteed her neutrality—the very day before, it had declined the offer made to it by France, to support it with 5 army corps." (English Blue Book, No. 71.) On this date of August 4th, the Belgian Government telegraphed to the Cabinets at London, Paris, and St. Petersburg to express its desire for common and concerted action towards the "end of resisting the forcible measures employed by Germany," and it added, "That Belgium is pleased to be able to declare that it will assume the defense of the fortified places." (Belgian Gray Book, No. 40.)

Divisions and a small cavalry division numbering in all about 93,000 rifles, 6,000 sabres, 324 guns, 102 machine guns and the necessary auxiliary troops.

A glance at the map will show that this line of concentration is in prolongation of the Meuse, with its right behind the low, marshy country at the headwaters of the Dyle and Geete. An excellent position that made it possible for the British Army to come in from the west and connect up with the V French Army on its right and the Belgians on its left, so that the entire Allied line would face east. Apparently such a deployment was contemplated by the French when the British Army was moving up from Boulogne, Havre and Rouen.

The Belgians at first intended to stand and fight on this line, expecting to be assisted by the Allies. On the 18th, that aid not having materialized, and being pressed by three German corps and three cavalry divisions, the Belgian Army fell back on Antwerp, its base, assuring the British and French at the same time "of the unreserved support of the Belgian Army on the left flank of the Allied armies with the whole of its troops and all available resources, wherever their line of communications with the base at Antwerp, where all their ammunition and food supplies are kept, is not in danger of being severed by large hostile forces."² How nearly fatal was their final withdrawal into Antwerp and attempted stand at the point will be shown later.

² "1914"—Viscount French, p. 46.

The Operations

War was declared by France on the 3d of August and on the 5th, word was received by France of the violation of the neutrality of Belgium by the Germans, and Belgium appealed for help.¹

The Belgian mobilization had commenced on the 2d of August and the concentration along the river Geete was practically completed by the 6th of the month. The Belgian Army consisted of 6 divisions, with a small cavalry division and certain fortress troops. The 3d Division was sent forward from Diest to Liege to assist in the defense of that point but, after the capture of the city proper, withdrew to the main field Army. The 4th Division assisted in the defense of Namur but did not effect its withdrawal therefrom as effectively as did the 3d Division from Liege. In round numbers, the Belgian Army consisted of about 100,000 men, but only about 54,000 of these were concentrated on the Geete. King Albert's headquarters in command of the Field Armies was at Louvain. On July 31st, before the declaration of war, the three German corps nearest Liege were moving toward the frontier, namely the 7th (Westphalia); 4th (Schleswig-Holstein); and 10th (Hanover). Early on the morning of August 4th, the 2d and 4th Cavalry Divisions of von der Marwitz' 2d Cavalry Corps,

¹ See General Map.

entered Belgium and attempted to force a crossing of the Meuse at Visé, but were stopped by a Belgian detachment holding the bridge, and it was not until August 7th that they were able to move across to cover the attack on Liege.

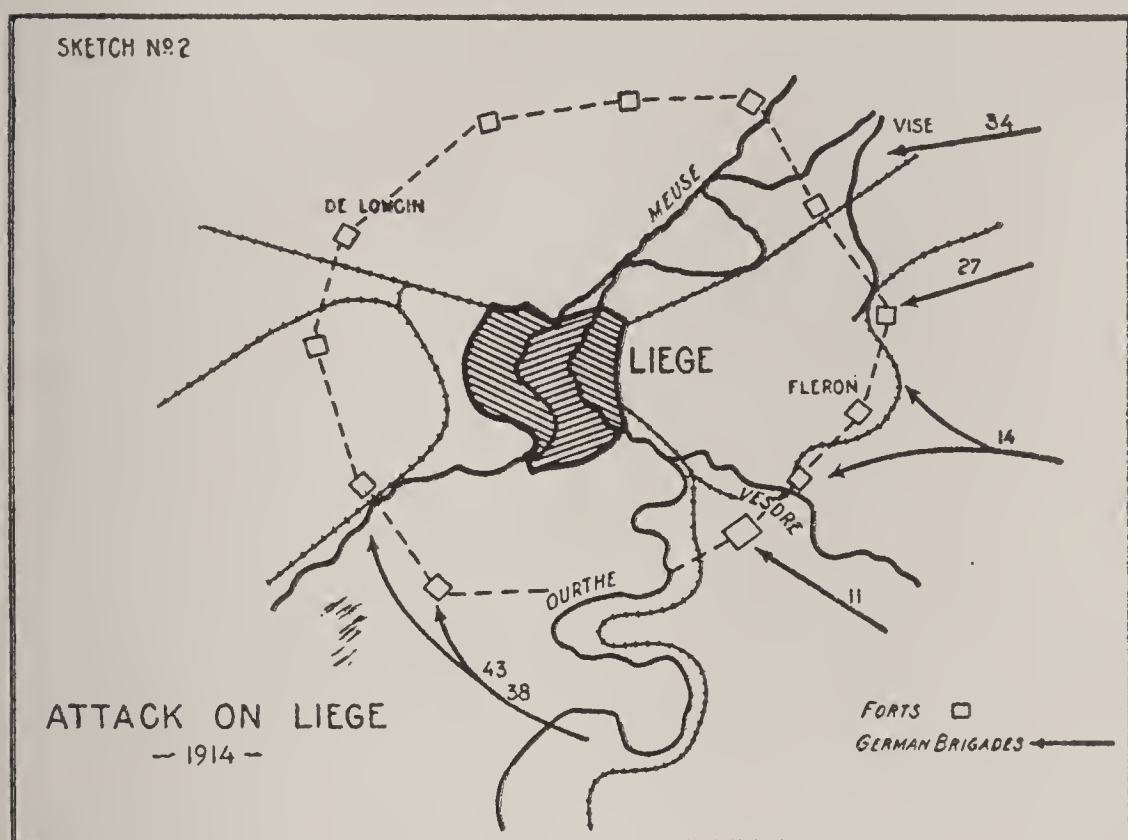
To the south, along the valley of the Meuse and in the Ardennes, the 9th, 5th and the Guard Cavalry Divisions established a screen covering the concentration of the II and III Armies, and this screen was, with the assistance of armored cars, infantry cyclists and Jagers, effectively established before the French cavalry was free to cross the Belgian frontier.²

In addition to these movements, the French frontier fortress of Longwy was besieged by troops from the army of the Crown Prince. Troops of the II Army seized the bridge at Huy on August 10th and, on this same day, a reconnaissance was made by the Crown Prince's forces toward Verdun.

There seems to be no question but the Germans expected to encounter little or no opposition in seizing Liege and figured that they would be able to get through the narrow pass between Liege on the south and the Dutch frontier on the north in a minimum of time, so that they could accomplish the deployment of the I and II Armies before the general advance started. This being the case the brigades that were concentrated in the areas closest

² "Forty Days in 1914," Maurice, p. 42.

to Liege were sent forward to seize that place.³ The 14th Brigade moved in from the east to the north of the River Vesdre; the 11th Brigade to the south and on the left of the 14th; and the 27th Brigade to the north. On the extreme right was the 34th Brigade and on the left the 43d and 38th.



In moving forward, the 14th Brigade encountered considerable opposition, not only from Belgian soldiers, but, it is alleged, from citizens. The commander was killed early in the operations and von

³ See Sketch No. 2.

Ludendorff, who happened to be in that vicinity, took charge.⁴

Von Emmich, the commander of the 10th German Corps, commanded this mixed force, and demanded the surrender of the town on August 5th. White flags were displayed at the entrance, but upon investigation it developed that they were not authorized.

Shortly before the war, von Emmich had been a guest of King Albert during which time, in all probability, he did not keep his eyes shut. It may be that he was selected for this command on account of what he had learned on this visit of his to the King of the Belgians.

The city itself was occupied on August 7th, but the last fort, (Fort Loncin) did not fall until the night of August 15th. Von Leman, the defender of Liege, was wounded and captured with the fort.

Von Ludendorff is supposed to have ridden boldly up to the citadel in a motorcar and alone and single-handed to have demanded the surrender of the few Belgians at that place.

As already stated, the 3d Belgian Division that was holding the field works in the intervals between the forts, was withdrawn and sent to join the main army in time to prevent its, the 3d Division's, capture.

⁴ Ludendorff as Oberquartiermeister of von Bulow's Army was present as liaison officer.

From the first to the last the siege and the operations around Liege lasted 12 days, during a greater part of the time that the mobilization and concentration of the German armies was proceeding.

If the Germans anticipated the opposition that they encountered at Liege, it is hard to understand why they did not have their siege howitzers (Austrian Skodas) present with the advanced forces. It was necessary to send back for these weapons in order to reduce the forts, a thing which greatly delayed the final accomplishment of their task.

On August 13th, von Kluck's forces moved through Aix-la-Chapelle three days late, crossing the Meuse by the bridges to the north of Liege. The II Army crossed by the bridges to the south. It was the intention to "clear . . . the narrow and troublesome defile between Liege and the Dutch frontier as soon as possible."

On August 12th, the German cavalry screen came in touch with the Belgians at various places, fighting unsuccessful engagements at Haelen on that date and on August 13th at Tirlemont and Enghezee, near the field of Ramilles. On August 14th, a detachment of Jagers attacked Dinant, but fell back before stiff opposition.⁵

On the afternoon of August 17th, the two German armies (the I and II), received their order from the Supreme Command for an advance next morn-

⁵ Each German Cavalry Division had from 2 to 5 jager battalions mostly on or in motor vehicles.

ing. Quoting certain extracts from this order will bring out vital defects:

"The I and II Armies and the 2d Cavalry Corps (Marwitz) will be under the orders of the commander of the II Army during the advance north of the Meuse."

"It is most important that the enemy's forces reported to be in position between Diest-Tirlemont-Wavre, should be shouldered away from Antwerp."⁶

Note this fatal defect of organization—placing one army under the commander of another and creating a new distribution at the eleventh hour.

What the Germans should have done was create a group of armies, as they afterwards did, designating an army commander and giving him a group staff. In this case, von Bulow's staff was not only an army but a group of armies staff. History teaches us that it is bad policy to place the commander of one army under an officer who is directly commanding another. In this case, von Kluck's army, by this order, really became the right flank guard of von Bulow's army. By this change in command during operations, the German Supreme Command had violated Abraham Lincoln's famous aphorism, "Never swap horses while crossing a stream."

The situation on the German right on August 18th, from a strategical viewpoint, resembles the

⁶ "The March on Paris, 1914," Kluck, p. 21.

situation at the beginning of the Waterloo campaign. The German I and II Armies are Napoleon—the Belgian Army is Blucher—Antwerp is Cologne—The British Army and V French Army are Wellington and the Dutch-Belgians. Napoleonic strategy dictates that in a situation like this, the decisive strategical directive is the junction point of two allied armies, yet the Germans wanted “to shoulder the Belgians away from Antwerp.” Had the Belgians allowed this and retired west, dropping back to the line of the Scheldt, on the British left flank, doubtless the German envelopment would have been stopped on the Sambre and the Germans never would have reached the Marne or the coast. The Belgians fell back on Antwerp, which was their base, and held that place longer than was wise on account of Winston Churchill’s promise of help, which did not materialize. Result—The Belgians lost Antwerp anyway—one division of their army was interned in Holland and the balance driven back to the coast in a generally bad condition.

Falling back on Antwerp had some good points, for it diverted two German corps that might have been used on the Marne, yet had the Belgians remained in the open, there probably would not have been any Marne.

It was originally intended that von Kluck should march through Aix-la-Chapelle on August 10th, but the delay at Liege forced a change to August 13th. “The 13th of August was, therefore, fixed

as the date for the march through Aix-la-Chappelle instead of the 10th. . . . The uncertain situation about Liege prevented the issue of any definite orders, besides which the roads, which had been torn up and blocked, needed a great deal of repair.”⁷

Had the Germans moved on August 10th and had other incidents happened the way they actually did, the German army would have arrived on the Sambre before either the British or V French Army, catching the British concentrating just south of Maubeuge and the V French Army part in position, but the 18th Corps detraining at Maubeuge and the 9th Corps farther south en route. (The 9th corps was destined for the IV French Army.)

“Had the German Army been mobilized and deployed three days earlier, a more sweeping and decisive result would probably have been gained. At the outbreak of war, time is always of the greatest importance, and in certain situations it is vital.”⁸

Possibly, however, Sordet’s cavalry, on its reconnaissance towards Liege on the 6th of August, might have discovered the Germans, and his report to that effect would probably have stimulated the French and British to greater activity.

It goes without saying that the Germans wanted the superlative of activity from their maneuver wing, which was under von Kluck and von Bulow, for their order read: “The II Army will march

⁷ “The March on Paris, 1914,” General von Kluck, p. 12.

⁸ “The March on Paris, 1914,” General von Kluck, p. 13.

with its right flank on Wavre, and the I Army will receive orders to march on Brussels and to cover the right flank of the armies. Its advance, together with that of the II Army, will regulate the pace of the general wheel.”⁹

Let us now turn our attention to the south and see what was transpiring.

The French concentration was progressing rapidly and was virtually completed by August 14th. Anticipating a German advance south of the Meuse through Belgium and Luxemburg, Sordet’s Cavalry, was sent across the Belgian frontier on August 6th, the day after Belgium’s request for help, and reconnoitered toward Liege on August 8th, and, between August 11th and 15th towards Neufchateau and north of the Meuse towards Namur and Charleroi.

“These enterprises brought negative results.” “It was not until August 15th that General Joffre received definite information that large German forces were moving westwards through Liege.”¹⁰

Joffre had not expected this, however, he at once extended his left, and prepared to attack through the Ardennes, where he assumed that the Germans were weak, that is, if they were advancing on Brussels in strength. The V Army moved across the Belgian frontier into the angle formed by the Sambre and the Meuse between Charleroi, Namur,

⁹ “Forty Days in 1914,” Maurice, p. 32.

¹⁰ “Forty Days in 1914,” Maurice, p. 30.

and Dinant and the IV Army moved into the Front Line.¹¹

The First Offensive in Alsace

On August 7th, the covering troops of the 7th Army Corps (General Bonneau) about Belfort, moved into Upper Alsace and, taking the Germans at Altkirch by surprise, routed them and on August 8th occupied Mulhausen. On the 10th of August, the French were driven out by parts of the German 14th and 15th Army Corps and escaped from a German outflanking movement by a rapid retreat at the right moment. On August 11th, the German 42d Infantry Division and the Bavarian Cavalry Division severely defeated an advance brigade of the French 15th Army Corps on the open Lorraine frontier at Lagarde (on the border east of Nancy). One thousand prisoners, a flag and two batteries were the spoils of war.¹²

Strategical Effect of the First Operations Into Alsace

This operation into Alsace was contemplated by Plan 17 for the purpose of freeing the inhabitants of Alsace who had remained loyal to France. It was not executed for the purpose of appeasing the

¹¹ See Sketch No. 3.

¹² When Joffre moved the V Army to the north and slipped the IV Army into the front line he transferred the 2d and 11th corps from the V to the IV Army; the 18th from the II to the V Army; and the 9th from the II to the IV Army. The V Army was further reinforced by certain Reserve Divisions.

demand of Paris that something be done and for political reasons as one writer states.

It had quite far-reaching influences, since it drew the German 14th and 15th Army Corps in that direction. The encounter was very much like Kernstown in the Valley in 1862, which while a tactical failure was a strategic success in that it attracted forces destined elsewhere to that flank, thereby relieving the pressure on other threatened forces. Wynne, in the *Army Quarterly* claims that this advance delayed the German contemplated offensive towards the Moselle about a week. After August 7th and 8th, the center of gravity of the German troops in the vicinity of Metz began to shift more to the south.

The General French Offensive¹³

On the 14th, the French Army was ready for the general offensive into Lorraine.

General Pau, the one-armed veteran of 1870, relieved the incompetent commander of the previous expedition into Alsace and was reinforced until he had about one-half of the I Army. The balance of the I Army under Dubail, its commander, was to seize the passes of the Vosges covering the right flank of the II Army (De Castelnau), that was to strike in on the line connecting Metz and Strassburg in the general direction of Saarburg, his left being protected by the III Army of De Ruffey.

¹³ See General Map and Sketch No. 3.

The movement was hardly under way when word came of the German advance to the north of the Meuse. The cavalry reconnaissances of Sordet were unproductive, but other troops moving to the north in the general extension were struck at Dinant on August 15th by strong advance forces of Germans and the cavalry got in touch with other German forces that had moved out from Huy toward Gembloux on August 16th. Meanwhile, the V French Army was extending its left to the Sambre, but now Joffre sent the 18th and 9th Corps, a cavalry corps, and the Algerian and Morocco divisions to the north. These two latter organizations originally were intended for the forces of Pau in Upper Alsace. By this detachment, the I and II Armies were reduced to about six corps. It was the hope of the French command that this offensive into Lorraine would puzzle the Germans and cause them to draw troops to the south from their northern flank, or delay shifting troops in that direction.

Pau on the right advanced northward from Belfort and struck from the region of Thann, completely turning the German divisions in the vicinity of Mulhausen.

By August 19th, Pau was in control of Upper Alsace, including the approaches to Colmar, Neu Brisach and the Rhine bridges.

After the withdrawal of the French from the first offensive into Upper Alsace, the German 14th and 15th Army Corps were moved north and their places

were taken by landwehr, which probably facilitated Pau's victory.

By this time, the remainder of the I Army had secured the passes of the Vosges.

Meanwhile, De Castelnau was moving towards his objective and, by August 20th, had captured one after another the German positions south and south-east of Metz.

The Germans now became alarmed by this advance and determined to smash it in accordance with their plan. Their main position was strong with interminable lines of trenches covered by barbed-wire entanglements and supported by heavy artillery from Metz.

On August 20th, at Morhange and Saarburg, the French moved forward to attack. Without adequate artillery support and becoming mixed up in the wire and enveloped by heavy fire, they were driven back. Their attack was met by units of the VI Army in front while the 14th and 15th Army Corps of the VII Army were moved in on the right to pinch off the French on their eastern flank, but instead of bringing down sufficient force from the V Army to envelop the other flank only one-half of the Wurttemberg Corps was sent down and it was inadequate. Neither were other troops that were available used. The result was a barren tactical frontal victory from which the French retired upon their covering positions at Nancy and Luneville and

the German opportunity for a "Cannae" in that locality was gone.

Here was von Moltke's opportunity to "pinch off" the French in Lorraine, one of his two alternative reasons for his heavy concentration on his left. It looked as if the French were walking in the gigantic trap which had been so often tested on the German War Game Table.

Matters did not come to this point. General Headquarters feared drives thrown against Diedenhofen pivot if the V Army was diverted and wheeled to the south to be the northern lever of the pinchers. This fear was groundless however, yet only half of a Corps was diverted to the south.

Not even the outlying troops of the Metz fortress were brought up. However, in furtherance of his idea "to tie up the main forces of the French and to thus lighten the task for the right wing of the Army, which was wheeling about," von Moltke ordered the picked troops of the VI and VII Armies to attack.

It is hard to follow the mental processes of the German High Command at this time.

1st. Under the plan, they contemplated an offensive in Lorraine, in violation of the von Schlieffen idea, for the purpose of pinning superior hostile forces to the ground or to pinch them off.

2d. About August 17th, fearing the French masses were moving to the north, they notify von Kluck that the main movement is to be through Belgium and Luxemburg into France and turn the

axis of advance of the 6th, 11th, 18th, and 19th Army Corps to the northwest.

3d. Then when the French appear in force in Lorraine, the Germans only bring down one division of the V Army to act as one lever of the pinchers.

4th. They hold out the outlying troops of the Metz garrison; and the seven Landwehr Brigades in the Nied position are not placed under orders of the officers commanding the battle.

5th. They make no arrangements for unified command, and the VI and VII Armies, after a barren tactical success, are allowed to follow up the French later to attack them and thereby making impossible their transfer to the right in time to be of any assistance to the assault wing—this notwithstanding the fact that railroad transportation was waiting on the siding about Strassburg for that very purpose. From the German view-point, it would have been a Godsend if their troops in Lorraine had been defeated leaving the French to attack their fortified line. There the French would have stuck and the VI and VII Armies could either one or both have been shifted to the right as contemplated for the VII Army.

General Headquarters purposely refrained from directing this battle leaving its conduct to the two Army Commanders. "No co-operation was provided between the Metz-Diedenhofen fortresses, the Nied position and the VI and VII Armies.

Von Moltke wanted to do two things at the same

time, namely, win a victory in Lorraine while the right wing pushed forward to a decisive assault. It was on this idea that he was wrecked."¹⁴

The vacillation of the German High Command eclipses that of any other High Command in modern times unless it was the French High Command in 1870.

Having driven back the French Armies between Metz and Strassburg, the VI and VII Armies followed them up towards Nancy and the Mirecourt Gap.

Operations on the German Right

The I to V German Armies, the assault wing, began the advance on August 18th, according to plan.

On August 15th, when Joffre received definite information that large German forces were moving westward through Liege, he extended his left by sending the V French Army across the Belgian frontier into the angle formed by the Sambre, and the Meuse between Charleroi, Namur and Dinant.

In order to protect French Flanders from raids and to cover the deployment of the British Expeditionary Force, General d'Amade was sent to Arras to take command of a group of territorial divisions consisting of the 84th at Douai, which was sent forward later to Condé—the 82d at Arras, and the 81st at St. Omer, the 88th at Lille, and two reserve

¹⁴ Baumgarten-Crusius.

divisions sent from the garrison of Paris. All these movements northward were completed by August 21st and probably before Joffre realized the strength of the Germans in Belgium, particularly those west of the Meuse.

Meanwhile, Joffre's concentration having been completed, he started to carry out the offensive in Lorraine. The modification of his original offensive plan in so far as it pertained to the V Army was for that army to attack through the Ardennes.

III and IV French Armies

In addition to the activity of the French I and II Armies before related, on August 21st, the III and IV Armies struck respectively the German Crown Prince at Virton and the Duke of Wurttemberg north of Neufchateau but were driven back.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the Germans, who had occupied Brussels on August 19th, turned south and on August 21st and 22d arrived in front of the V French Army and the British along the Sambre.

From August 21st to the 23d occurred the battles of Mons and Charleroi, two days after the III and IV French Armies had been forced back on the defensive, and on the night of the 25th of August, "the most critical day of all"¹⁶ Joffre was forced to decide whether he would concentrate and fight in

¹⁵ This forcing back of the IV Army left a gap that might have been fatal to the French—it will be discussed later.

¹⁶ Simonds "History of the World War."

northern France or retreat to the south for a final stand.

Neither the British nor the French intended to fight on the defensive on the Sambre, that role being forced upon them by the Germans.¹⁷ Until the affairs on the Sambre, "Joffre was far from renouncing all idea of attack. He had been forced to weaken his offensive in the south, but this was to be remedied by a blow in the north, and therefore, his central reserve, the IV Army, was brought up toward the Ardennes, ready to strike if it were found that the enemy were moving in force north of the Meuse, while if the Germans were not in strength there, the British would come in on the left of the V Army and with it envelop the German right. The idea still prevailed that the Germans could not be strong enough to secure their center in the Ardennes against attack and at the same time carry out a great attack against the Allied left."¹⁸

On the afternoon of August 21st, Lanrezac was still desirous of an offensive and, as Sir John French says in his book "1914," "was anxious to know if I would attack the flank of the German columns which were pressing him back from the river."

Apparently Lanrezac at this late date did not know of the German enveloping movement north of the Meuse.

¹⁷ "Forty Days in 1914," Maurice, p. 60.

¹⁸ "Forty Days in 1914," Maurice, p. 34.

A great deal of discussion has arisen over the French plan. Some think that Joffre contemplated the step by step defensive from the very outset as soon as he discovered that the Germans were in force to the north. Others think that he formulated this plan after the battle of Le Cateau.

Unquestionably, Joffre stuck to the idea of the offensive until on the night of the 25th, when, after all his offensives had failed, Namur and Ayvelles (south of Mezieres) had fallen, and the line of the Sambre and Northern Meuse had been forced, he issued his order for the retreat.

Charleroi and Mettet¹

The German advance came on August 18th, and the Belgians, not receiving any support or assistance from their allies, fell back through Brussels on Antwerp. Von Kluck occupied Brussels on August 19th; meanwhile his troops were swinging around towards the south looking for the British Army which von Kluck could not make himself believe was not landing at Calais or thereabouts. The gradual wheel of the German forces through Belgium by August 21st brought von Bulow nearer to the Allies than was von Kluck, and the II German Army was consequently the first to become engaged. We will, therefore, follow its movements before dealing with von Kluck.

The pivot of the Allied position was Namur, a fortress covering the junction of the Meuse and the Sambre and resembling the forts at Liege in design. The field force supporting the fortress garrison was the 4th Belgian Division. Having learned a lesson from their experience at Liege, the Germans did not try to carry the forts by assault, but brought up the Skoda howitzers that they had used at Liege and on August 22d opened on the forts. These howitzers were with the troops this time having accompanied the infantry of the Guard Reserve Corps.²

¹ See Sketch No. 3 and the General Map.

² The troops attacking Namur were the Guard Reserve Corps, left wing of the II Army and the 11th Army Corps, right wing of the III Army, the two corps being under General von Gallwitz.

The garrison of Namur, in addition to the troops mentioned, was reinforced by the detachments driven in from Huy and three battalions of French Infantry. Total strength about 18,000. The forts were destroyed in short order by gun fire, the Belgian infantry having no chance to reply. The German infantry advanced to the attack on August 23d, as soon as they were satisfied that the forts were out of action, and carried the positions, cutting off a part of the garrison; the town of Namur was occupied on August 24th.

By order issued on the evening of August 20th, German General Headquarters left it to "arrangements between the Higher Commands of the II and III Armies to bring the attack of the II Army upon the enemy west of Namur into unison with the attack of the III Army upon the Meuse line, Namur-Givet."³ General Headquarters thus renounced any direction of the great attack of the Assault Wing, the same as it did in the attack of the VI and VII Armies in Lorraine.

"Generaloberst" von Bulow by order of August 21st moved the I Army nearer the II Army with the justification "that otherwise the I Army would move too far away and could not support the II Army at the right time." One sees from this order that von Bulow is featuring the II Army at the expense of

³ "Deutsche Heerführung im Marnefeldzug 1914," Artur Baumgarten-Crusius.

the I Army which I Army apparently, in his estimation, is but a flank guard. This brought the I Army in a southerly direction when von Kluck wished to continue the advance in a southwesterly direction so he could envelop the British left and force the latter back on the V French Army and Maubeuge.

The II and III German Armies

The attack of the II Army over the Sambre and the III Army over the Meuse in cooperation was fixed for the morning of August 23d. The leading troops of the II Army pushed back the French Cavalry which had been independent until August 15th when it was assigned to the V Army and advanced troops over the Sambre as early as August 21st. "Towards midday of August 22d Generaloberst von Bulow determined to take advantage of the favorable opportunity since he had in front only three cavalry divisions of the Sordet Corps and the weaker infantry,"⁴ and "on August 22d, before the arrival of the further reinforcements to the enemy, to cross with the left wing this extremely difficult section of the Sambre."⁵ On the day before the German 10th Corps drove in the French troops at Charleroi and by night had a firm footing on the south bank of the Sambre.

The German 10th Reserve Corps got across the

⁴ Baumgarten-Crusius.

⁵ Bulow, p. 22.

river, but in the neighborhood of Thuin encountered stiff opposition. This was the French 18th Army Corps coming in on the left.

It is hard to understand why Lanrezac didn't dig himself in as did the British farther west, when he found he was to fight on the defensive, and then make an endeavor to hold the Germans north of the river. This he completely failed to do.

Just for the moment turn to von Hausen's III Army; on the evening of August 22d, the advance guards of the three corps, namely 12th, 12th Reserve and 19th Corps reached the Meuse on either side of Dinant. The attack on the town was made early on the morning of August 23d and after a sharp struggle the Germans entered it and crossed the river. Again why was not stronger resistance made by Lanrezac and why were not the French "dug in"? One explanation for the loss of the river line is the following. The 1st French Corps that had been holding this line was relieved on the evening of August 22d by the 51st Reserve Division. Thereupon the 1st Corps marched off in the direction of Mettet to reinforce the troops on the Sambre and the 51st Reserve Division was too weak a force.

Along the Sambre, the brunt of the German attacks was borne by the 3d and 10th French Corps.

By the afternoon of August 22d, the Germans had three corps on the south bank of the Sambre. The situation was not entirely unfavorable to the French. The French 18th Corps was coming in on the left

and had held up the German 10th Reserve Corps; the French 1st Corps along the Meuse had been relieved by the French 51st Reserve Division and was coming up on the right so that at this time the French along the Sambre were equal to the Germans and had the additional advantage of being on the defensive and Namur was holding out. Off to the west the British Army was coming up and von Kluck was still pretty well scattered in depth.

A joint attack by the I and II German Armies, arranged for the morning of August 23d, got under way. The Guard Corps on the south side of the Sambre had followed up the French and prepared to attack them in the Fosse position about 5 miles south of the river in the vicinity of Mettet. At the same time the 10th German Corps was forcing back the 3d French Corps to the vicinity of Walcourt and the 10th German Reserve Corps was attacking the 18th French Corps in the vicinity of Gozee and Thuin.

The Guard Corps, under von Plettenberg, had just started its preparation when word came in announcing the advance of fresh French troops from the southeast against the left flank of the Guard. This was the 1st French Corps coming up from Dinant. But just as it was about to deploy for action word came to Lanrezac to the effect that the Germans (12th Saxon Corps) was across the Meuse in his right rear and that the forts of Namur had fallen (the city was not occupied until the 24th).

Instead of directing the 1st Corps to attack at once, it was ordered back to the Meuse and to protect the communications of the V Army. So the 1st Corps was lost as far as having any influence on the battle on the Sambre and did not prevent von Hausen from establishing himself on the west bank of the Meuse. This incident reminds one of the performance of d'Erlon's corps between the fields of Ligny and Quatre Bras in the Waterloo Campaign.

The Guard, the danger to its flank being removed by the withdrawal of the 1st French Corps, renewed the attack and forced the right of the French line back, capturing the Mettet position; meanwhile the 10th German Corps was forcing the 3d French Corps back to the vicinity of Walcourt. At the same time the 10th German Reserve Corps renewed the attack on the 18th French Corps in the vicinity of Gozee and Thuin, and after fierce fighting, drove it back, its retirement being caused to a great extent by the uncovering of its right by the withdrawal of the 3d French Corps.

By nightfall on the 23d, the situation looked very gloomy for Lanrezac. His front had been driven back six or seven miles, his flank was threatened by the fall of Namur and the appearance of the III German Army at Dinant, and he had received information that the British Army had been attacked by three German Corps with a fourth working around its left flank. Having just been ordered to send

Sordet's cavalry to protect the British left from being turned, Lanrezac concluded that there was nothing to do but order the retreat. Dawn on the 24th, found the V French Army some hours on its way to the rear.

The British

Let us now glance at what was transpiring in front of the British Army.

Von Kluck was marching in parallel columns with right refused looking for the British who were expected from the direction of Lille. The German and British Cavalry came in contact to the north and northeast of Mons in the vicinity of Casteau (north of Mons) on the Soignes road. This was on the 22d and on the same date a British plane was shot down near Enghein. This seemed to be about the only exact information von Kluck had received up to date of the whereabouts of the British. Von der Marwitz' cavalry divisions were under the orders of the group commander von Bulow and, at the time, were away to the west looking for the British but not really getting in touch, since they allowed themselves to be held up by French territorials between the Lys and Scheldt. Joffre, as already related, had stationed territorials in the towns to the west to cover the British advance.

This use by the Germans of the 2d Cavalry Corps reminds one of the manner in which cavalry was so often used in the American Civil War,—off on an

independent mission and not contributing to the success of the fighting armies by screening them and getting information.

The German Cavalry Divisions up to the time of contact on the Sambre had covered the advance of the I and II Armies most effectively, for it will be recalled that Sordet returned from his reconnaissance towards Liege, Neufchateau and north of the Sambre with negative information. Now just as contact is established, the German Cavalry is off on an independent and unimportant mission. They are looking for the British and do not find them. The cavalry fight at Casteau was by German tactical cavalry.

Meanwhile the British troops are moving forward from their detraining point at Maubeuge and are occupying the line of the Condé canal, with the 2d Corps holding the line from near Condé around to the right rear of Mons, the 1st Corps being echeloned to the right rear of the Second. A cavalry brigade fills the gap of about five miles existing between the right of the British Army and the left of the French Corps on the extreme left of Lanrezac's forces.

The left flank of the 2d Corps is protected by the 19th Brigade made up of line of communications troops and Allenby's cavalry division. French territorials hold Valenciennes and two divisions under d'Amade are detraining at Lille and moving towards Tournai.

We now have a unique situation that so often occurs when an envelopment is attempted, that is, the so-called holding attack is too vigorous and the enemy falls back before the enveloping forces can envelop.

On August 22d, when von Bulow was attacking the V French Army in force, von Kluck's army was located about the following distances from the British. From their left to right, 9th Corps, 10 kilometers; 3d Corps, 22 kilometers; 4th Corps, 23 kilometers; 2d Corps, 45 kilometers; and 4th Reserve Corps still farther in the right rear. It will be recalled that von Moltke informed von Kluck of the landing of the British at Boulogne, consequently von Kluck's right was refused in anticipation of an encounter from the direction of Lille and von der Marwitz' cavalry corps was off looking for the British from that direction. The next day, namely August 23d, on which von Hausen forced the Meuse at Dinant and von Bulow was driving back the V French Army, we find von Kluck at daylight with right rear refused and confronted with the impossibility of getting all his troops into action that day. In the fighting along the Sambre, the I German Army's mission, even though it was to afford flank protection, was to envelop the British left flank and bring about a "Cannae" in the neighborhood of Maubeuge. Von Bulow's impetuosity prevented the envelopment, for von Kluck could not get up in time.

The French territorial troops off to the west fulfilled the requirements of detachments as laid down by von der Goltz. By their very presence off on the flank they held out superior numbers, namely the 2d German Corps, and the Cavalry, and prevented both from participating in the decisive action.

Mons

Promptly at daylight on August 23d, the German divisional cavalry began to try out the British outposts. During the course of the morning the artillery of the 9th and 3d German Corps came into position and opened fire on the right of the 2d British Corps at Mons and, at about 11 o'clock, the German infantry launched a violent attack. The Germans at this point attacked in mass, their attacking troops preceded by skirmishers. Their losses were terrific due principally to the accuracy of the British rifle fire.

The German attack was made by their 9th and 3d Corps and resulted in the capture of the town of Mons and the canal held by Hamilton's 3d British Division, the right of Smith-Dorrien's 2d Corps.

Towards evening, the advance guards of the 4th German Corps were coming into action but were held back by Allenby and the 19th Brigade, under Drummond, together with 84th French Territorials. The 7th German Corps, of von Bulow's army, during this time, was leisurely advancing towards Binche in the direction of the corps of Sir Douglas Haig, which latter was not seriously engaged on August 23d. Von Kluck was suffering from the lack of information and, thinking that the British troops were farther to the west, allowed his 4th and 2d Corps to march in a direction southwest until late

in the afternoon, when he learned to a greater degree of certainty where the British left really was; then it was too late in the day to complete the envelopment.

On the evening of this eventful day, we find the 2d German Corps marching through Grammont and the 4th Reserve Corps near Hal and away from the main fight. Had von Kluck been able to press his attack on the evening of August 23d, the fate of the little British Army would have been sealed; its flank would have been turned completely and probably the army either routed or captured.

The absence of von der Marwitz' cavalry on a distant mission; the fact that von Moltke away off at Coblenz was not keeping in touch with the movements of von Kluck to the extreme west; and the further fact that apparently von Bulow was paying too much attention to the II Army and not to his group of armies, may be taken as the main reason for the failure of this day.

After the successes of August 23d, the I German Army determined to force the British back into Maubeuge and to cut off their retreat to the southwest by throwing forward the right wing of the Army (2d Army Corps and 4th Reserve Corps) in connection with Independent Cavalry Corps No. 2 (Marwitz). Von Kluck had finally succeeded in obtaining from General Headquarters the subordination of this cavalry corps to his orders, but these

troops did not arrive until the evening of the 24th and in no condition for operations until rested.

August 24.—Von Bulow's Army followed up the retreating French and at 4:00 p. m. called upon the Headquarters of the III Army to support their attack in the direction of Mettet. At this time the direction of the advance of the III German Army was southwest, the Cavalry Corps No. 1 was on its left flank and the IV German Army was driving back the left of the IV French Army.

"In spite of the victory of the German IV Army adjacent to the left, news of which had been received meanwhile, and in spite of certain success in the pursuit towards the southwest, Army Headquarters No. 3 came up in accordance with the wish of Army Headquarters No. 2. . . . The II Army succeeded by its own strength, in forcing the V French Army to retreat. But valuable hours were lost for the III Army in order to throw this retreat into disorder or to entirely surround the enemy."¹ In addition to this, the 1st Cavalry Corps which had been covering the fronts of the II and III German Armies, on August 20th when it was near and to the south of Dinant, was ordered to the rear and then to pass to the north of Namur to cover the flank and front of the II German Army. Thus Independent Cavalry Corps No. 1 was forced to make a march around to the rear of the III and

¹ Baumgarten-Crusius.

II Armies in order to be used at the place where it was wanted. As a result of this forced march, the animals were in no condition for effective service when they arrived at their destination. Notwithstanding the fact that this cavalry corps was deployed in the wrong place at the outset, it would have been better had the Supreme Command allowed it to remain where it was, particularly when the Supreme Command, even as early as August 15th, knew that there was a gap between the French IV and V Armies; and when this gap was further extended by the turning of the left flank of the French IV Army, it seems unquestionable that the cavalry should not have been moved. But for this move the cavalry would have had a clear swing in rear of the V French and the British Army and a "Cannae" might have been effected on that flank.² One can see through all this, the ever featuring of the II Army by von Bulow and General Headquarters doing nothing to prevent it.

On this subject Baumgarten-Crusius says: "The subordination of the I Army to the command of the II Army and the order to the II Army and III

² The withdrawal of the V Army from the pocket it was about to fall into reflects great credit upon Lanrezac. Whether it was due to his skillful handling, to lack of skill on the part of the Germans, or to fortuitous circumstances, it is impossible to say, but the facts are, the Germans had an opportunity to bring about a "Cannae" by the left of their northern wing and to completely envelop the V French and the British Armies, but were prevented by the timely withdrawal of these forces.

Armies to establish liaison for the first great engagement of the decisive wing proved a mistake. 'Mutual agreement is only a half measure. It lends to friction and failure.' Subordination of one army to an adjacent army robs the former army of the joy of independent action. 'The Command of the II Army, even with the greatest disinterestedness, protects the interests of its own army because it makes decisions and gives orders from the point of view of that army.' The II Army needed only to fight on August 23d and 24th in order to detain the enemy on the Sambre front, then the I and III Armies could have closed in about the British and the French north wing at the right time.

" 'A strong central direction, however, either by the Command of a Group of Armies, as in the latter course of the war, or by General Headquarters, which however would have had to be nearer for this purpose, was the *sine-qua-non* for this.' "

At this time the German liaison system was not well developed. The Telephone troops did not have enough new instruments; the Radio Service was also insufficiently developed. At times it took 14 hours to get messages through without consideration of the time taken to get the reply back. General Headquarters had only one receiving station at its disposal. Army Command No. 1 had two different wire systems but only one connecting with GHQ. Neither the Chief of the Operations Division GHQ, nor the Chief of Staff nor his first assistant were

ever with the armies up to the Battle of the Marne. In isolated cases officers were sent from GHQ as bearers of long recopied directions, which were often anticipated by events and also with instructions to give orders in the name of the Chief of Staff based upon their own personal estimate of the situation. Instances of this will be pointed out later.

It is quite clear from what has just been said, wherein the greatest weakness of the German Army lay.

Let me reiterate in regard to the cooperation spirit so much emphasized in the German Army: "Cooperation cannot replace nor be a substitute for Command." There must always be a head who must direct. Subordinate units assist one another in so far as possible but not forgetting their main mission as laid down by this head.

The Retreat From Mons and the Sambre

With the withdrawal of the V French Army, there was nothing left for the British Expeditionary Force to do but fall back with it. The fortress of Maubeuge, about five miles in rear of the 1st British Corps, was a very tempting place of refuge for the British Army, hardpressed as it was. Fortunately, however, Sir John French did not allow this fortress to exert its pernicious power of attraction upon him, so he fell back on the fortification, not into it.

By the withdrawal from the line of the Sambre and Meuse by the British and French, there can be no question that the Germans lost an unusual opportunity to bring about a "Cannae" by a double envelopment. Neither French nor Lanrezac had any idea of retreating and Lanrezac ordered a counter-attack to the north for August 24th. Judging from the subsequent marching powers of the I and III German Armies, as shown by their later prodigies, they would have been able to carry out the encircling movement had they been given half a chance.

The trouble was von Bulow's conception of what had happened to the French. He reported to the General Headquarters that the French retreat was a rout. In his report he states "I have ordered, for the 25th, a continuation of a pursuit of the beaten adversary in a southwest direction."¹ This estimate

¹ von Bulow's report.

of the situation by von Bulow had a far-reaching influence. Von Moltke at Coblenz and out of touch with all except von Bulow—the wire lines with von Bulow were more efficient than those with the I and III Armies—assumed that the decisive victory by the Assault wing had been won.

“The exceedingly favorable reports which came in to General Headquarters, even on the 25th of August, from the right wing of the Army, in connection with the great victory in Lorraine of August 20-23, led to the belief in General Headquarters that the great decisive battle in the West had been decided in our favor. Under the impression of this decisive victory, the Chief of the General Staff, in spite of the considerations opposed to it, decided on August 25th to send forces to the East. Two Corps were taken immediately from the right wing—the Guard Reserve and the 11th Corps. Four others were to come later from the center and left wing but were not sent.”^{2 3} Let us pause for a moment

² Baumgarten-Crusius.

³ It will be recalled that the Guard Reserve and 11th Corps, under von Gallwitz, were the attacking troops at Namur and with the fall of that place and the converging of the II and III Armies, these Corps were pinched out so to speak and would have had to be put in the line elsewhere. Von Bulow's optimistic accounts of his victory over the French on the Sambre coming in about the time that the worst accounts of the Happenings in East Prussia were arriving, nothing was more natural than that von Moltke should send assistance consisting of the corps no longer in the line—in this connection see comment on the failure to send the 9th Reserve Corps in place of one of these corps. The 9th Reserve Corps had been in Schleswig-Holstein and was now joining the main army.

and interpolate a story that gives another reason why von Moltke decided to send troops to the East Front. The expression "The Cossacks won the Battle of the Marne" gained wide publicity. The Junkers whose stronghold was Königsberg and whose estates lay largely in East Prussia, as did some of the estates belonging to the Kaiser, did not look upon the overrunning of their property by Cossacks with complacency and indifference and were continually bringing pressure to bear upon the Kaiser, who passed it on to von Moltke, to send troops to relieve the situation at the earliest possible moment regardless of the military needs of the hour."

With the fall of Namur, the retreat of the French and British from the Sambre-Meuse line and the optimistic reports of von Bulow, and the victories reported in Lorraine, von Moltke, thinking everything was virtually finished except the mopping up, weakened and sent these corps to assist in the recovery of the property of the Junkers and also the Hunting Lodge of the Kaiser.

Whether or not this is a true story is not known but it is a fact that troops were withdrawn from the West Front for service on the East Front at this time.

In the Quartermaster Corps training trip of 1905, von Schlieffen had six corps and two cavalry divisions for the protection of East and West Prussia as a part of his plan; von Moltke had four corps

and one cavalry division in his plan. The transfer of the Guard Reserve and the 11th Corps after Namur, together with the 8th Saxon cavalry division, seems to indicate that in regard to the east front von Moltke was attempting to return to the von Schlieffen estimate of the strength necessary.

As already related, the III and IV French Armies, in furtherance of their plan to attack through the Ardennes covering the left flank of the Army in Lorraine, had moved forward. Meanwhile the IV and V German Armies were moving towards the southwest. The collision between these forces occurred on the banks of the rivers Lesse and Semois in the Semois Basin. The German IV Army forced back the IV French Army to the Meuse on both sides of Sedan. The French defeat was due to the superiority of troop leading on the part of the Germans who, turning to account the difficult terrain of the Ardennes, were able to secure the maximum benefit. Fort Ayvelles, south of Mezieres, fell on August 25th thereby widening the breach or gap that already existed in the French line. Considerable fighting occurred in this vicinity for the following days. According to accounts, the French IV Army was preparing for a counter-attack when the order from Joffre for the retreat was received.

To the south of the IV French Army, the III French Army moved forward to attack the Germans and encountered the Army of the Crown Prince on both sides of Longwy. Contact was made on August

22d near Virton and the French, after poor tactical handling, were forced back into the Chiers Area in the vicinity of Longuyon.

A terrific battle raged in this area on August 24th. On August 25th, the French 6th (iron) Corps under Sarrail struck forth from the direction of Verdun via Etain against the flank of the Crown Prince's Army. The attack was so fierce that the 33d (Aussen Division) from Metz had to be thrown into action.

"German General Headquarters against its better judgment, had allowed the V Army to make a precipitate advance, exactly as it did in the case of the VI Army. When the French III Army began its advance towards the north on August 21st, the V German Army determined upon a frontal attack. General Headquarters curbed this army at first, but then yielded. The result was exactly as with the VI German Army, an 'ordinary' victory, no 'Cannae.'"⁴ "Longwy" fell at midday on August 25th but the III French Army was able to extricate itself.

By August 25th, the entire French front was in touch except between the right of the V and left of the IV Armies. But Foch's new IX Army, created on August 20th, was moving up into this gap.

Von Moltke's plan for a double envelopment and a "Cannae" had fallen through again.

⁴ Baumgarten-Crusius.

From the manner in which the campaign developed it was clear the significance of the Schlieffen admonition: "Make the right strong." By having too strong a left, the French had merely been forced out of the bag that was supposed to close on them. But even at that, von Moltke had it in his power to correct the initial error of deployment for there were railroad vehicles galore waiting to carry troops from the left to the right wing. Subsequent to the crisis on the Sambre and Meuse, and in Lorraine, the German High Command seemed to lose what little control of the Army it had exerted before.

At the insistence of the Crown Prince of Bavaria, von Moltke allowed the offensive in Lorraine to continue.

In the Western Wing, he seemed to lean more and more upon von Bulow and preferred to leave the control of affairs in the hands of the respective Army Commanders relying for results upon cooperation, in which cooperation von Bulow and the interest of the II Army seemed to be paramount.

Von Bulow had a very much inflated reputation as a maneuverer of masses, from his experience in the Imperial Maneuvers upon which his reputation was built, and that reputation seemed to have had von Moltke somewhat under its spell. Orders to the Assault Wing were almost invariably sent through von Bulow—telegraphic communications with von Bulow were kept in a better condition of

efficiency by all odds than the corresponding communications with other armies.

This influence became more compelling until on the Aisne in September, von Moltke, after a conference with von Bulow, not only rectified the line of the I, II and III Armies but moved the IV and V Armies back from their commanding positions.

With the retreat of the British from the Sambre line, von Kluck entertained hopes of forcing them back on to the Fortress of Maubeuge.

Aeroplane reconnaissance at first indicated a giving way toward Maubeuge but later reconnaissance showed the British retreating in a southwesterly direction. Had Independent Cavalry Group No. 2 been in condition it might have turned the British left flank.

The British continued their withdrawal but more in a southerly direction than southwesterly. Von Kluck pursued vigorously and a series of sharp engagements occurred between the British cavalry and the pursuers.

The pursuit against the British right wing, Sir Douglas Haig's 1st Corps, was not pushed vigorously at first as it was desirable that the German right wing get around to the rear. As a result Haig retired without much difficulty. The location of the Mormal forest exercised considerable influence on the manner of the British withdrawal. For the British Army to have attempted to pass to the left (west of the forest) would have been to have

left a dangerous gap between its right and the left on the French V Army; to pass the entire army to the east was precluded by the paucity of roads. As a compromise, the 1st Corps passed to the east and the 2d Corps, with the bulk of the cavalry, to the west. The 24th Reserve Division of the 7th German Reserve Corps was left to invest Maubeuge; the 9th Corps for the time being continued to observe the defenses while the 3d Corps and the left division of the 4th Corps continued the pursuit of Haig's 1st Corps. The right division of the 4th Corps and the 2d Corps followed the British 2d Corps (Smith-Dorrien). As stated, the von der Marwitz cavalry corps under von Kluck's orders, covered the German right and endeavored to swing around the British left flank and cut them off from their base at Boulogne.

French Territorials

The 84th French territorials, who had been located off on the left, now occupied Cambrai and contributed their part toward holding off the enveloping German cavalry. Their presence also delayed the detachment of the German 4th Reserve Corps which stopped for the night of August 25 and 26 north of Valenciennes and consequently were not in the fighting of August 26th. Likewise, the Territorials under Perrin attracted a detachment of the 2d German Corps towards Lille and Arras so that they did not assist in the envelopment.

Le Cateau.¹

Soon after daybreak on August 26th, the advance troops of the left column of the German 4th Corps entered Le Cateau and found British soldiers of the 19th Brigade there and learned that the cavalry was a short distance away. Confused fighting occurred in and about the town. From the opposition, the Germans became convinced that the British were there in force. While this was going on, the left column of the 4th German Corps attacked Caudry and found indications that the British were also there in force in a position ready for a fight.

Prior to this, von Kluck must have been informed of the French troops holding Cambrai and of the location of the 1st British Corps, and now finding the line in between held by the 2d Corps, he could with reasonable certainty figure that all the British troops were there. Here was another opportunity to carry out the much coveted envelopment, and von Kluck had four corps and three cavalry divisions, total strength of about 120,000 men, as against 55,000 British, with which to turn the trick. His superiority in guns could not have been much less than three to one. The plan was similar to that at Mons, that is to say, von Kluck proposed to make a frontal attack, mainly with his artillery, followed by a double envelopment. The 4th Corps was to

¹ Designated by the Germans as the Battle of Solesmes.

attack from just west of Le Cateau to Caudry. The 3d Corps, of which the main body was about Maroilles and Landrecies when the battle opened, was to march west of the Sambre on Le Cateau in order to attack and envelop the British right. Von der Marwitz' cavalry was to pin down the British left wing while the 4th reserve corps came up against it from the direction Valenciennes; the 2d Corps was to move on Cambrai. The battle was fought with great stubbornness by the 2d British Corps for about seven hours. Meanwhile the 1st British Corps, which had repelled a night attack at Landrecies, was retiring towards the crossing of the Oise, pursued by the Guard cavalry and troops of the German 10th Corps and 10th Reserve Corps. Toward evening Smith-Dorrien, seeing that he must retire to prevent complete envelopment, issued his orders for breaking off the fighting but not until considerable of the fighting spirit had been taken out of the German troops. There seems to have been some "mix-up" in regard to the transmission of these withdrawal orders, for certain of the advance British detachments, not getting their orders, were cut off and either wiped out or captured. As unfortunate as this was from the individual unit viewpoint, it greatly facilitated the withdrawal of the other troops since the Germans, encountering these detachments, thought the British were holding on in force. Aside from some tactical encounters, the German cavalry, on August 26th, were of little

use, and after the fighting had ended, went off towards Bapaume and bivouaced about five miles north of the town.

August 26th marks the climax of the influence of the French Territorials on the British left. These Territorials occupied Cambrai and by so doing drew off the German 2d Corps and the Cavalry. They were finally forced to withdraw towards the southwest and on August 27th united with the Ebener Reserve Group, 55th and 56th Divisions, recently sent up.

Sordet's cavalry also had moved to the Allied left and was assisting in drawing the German towards the west. While all this was going on, the VI French Army was being formed of the 7th Corps brought west from Belfort and certain available reserve divisions.

Meanwhile, on the evening of August 25th, von Bulow ordered "an indefatigable pursuit towards the southwest of the beaten enemy."

Von Bulow in his report states that the pursuit was "continued without rest up to the battlefield of St. Quentin."

Von Bulow further states "the ruling thought, was to always leave sufficient elbow room in the great turning movement of the main force made up of the III, IV, and V Armies. At the same time we hoped to gradually outflank the enemy on the left during the pursuit."²

² Von Bulow's report, p. 28.

The II German Army continued its pursuit following the V French Army which fell back before it across the River Oise. On the morning of August 28th, the French Reserve Group, consisting of the 61st and 62d Divisions, made a surprise attack upon the German Independent Cavalry Corps No. 2, which was on the right wing of the I German Army, catching the cavalry in its billets. This attack was the beginning of the fighting that was known as the "Battle of Amiens." The fighting here continued on the next day, August 29th, and, in addition to the Reserve Group, was participated in by the 7th French Corps, the Alpine Chasseurs, the 81st, 82d, 84th and 88th Territorials, and the 3d and 5th Cavalry Divisions. The right wing of the I German Army bore the brunt while the left wing drove off the attacks from the direction of St. Quentin. The I German Army attempted to outflank this group around Amiens from the west, but the French withdrew and disappeared. It was while this fighting was going on that von Kluck received word that the French V Army was attacking the German II Army at St. Quentin and Guise.

St. Quentin-Guise.

On August 28th, Lanrezac at his headquarters at Laon, and under the eyes of Joffre himself, issued orders for an attack next day in which the British right was to participate. Lord French's forces were in no condition to take the offensive so the orders were changed confining the attack to the V French Army alone. It certainly was a stroke of luck that Sir John French decided that he could not make this attack for had he done so he would probably have been badly defeated and the decisive battle might have been called the Battle of St. Quentin-Guise instead of the Marne. The fact that the British Army still constituted a fighting force is probably what caused the Germans to be cautious and prevented them from making their tactical success over the French decisive. The V French Army at this time was isolated except for the British and the gradually forming VI French Army under Maunoury. On August 29th, the much discussed agreement was entered into between Joffre and Lord French under which the British were to retire behind the Aisne "Keeping always within one day's march of the French Armies." On this date, August 29th, the British base was transferred to St. Nazaire, with advance base at Le Mans.

The orders from the German High Command for the movements of the I Army issued on the 27th of

August were as follows: "The I Army, with the 2d Cavalry Corps under its orders, will march west of the Oise towards the lower Seine. It must be prepared to cooperate in the fighting with the II Army. It will also be responsible for the protection of the right flank of the armies, and will take steps to prevent any new enemy concentration in its zone of operations."

On the evening of August 30th, after the victory north of the Somme and the capture of Amiens, and toward the end of the II Army's engagement at St. Quentin, von Bulow sent the following wireless message to von Kluck: "In order to take full advantage of the victory, it is urgently desired that the I Army should turn towards La Fere-Laon with the pivot at Chauny."

Von Kluck had wanted to change his advance from the southwest to the south, and when this message came from von Bulow, he was only too glad to comply with it. General Headquarters expressly approved of such action in its order of August 31st which reads in part: "The movements begun by the I Army are in accordance with the views of General Headquarters."

Here both von Kluck and General Headquarters were perfectly in accord with the idea of ignoring the existence of this Maunoury force on the right flank.

It seems odd that General Headquarters did not ask what was being done with regard to Maunoury's

Army since in its order of August 27th it had especially mentioned enemy concentrations in the zone of operations of the I Army and directed their prevention.

From the wording of this order it is also clear that von Kluck's main task was "protection of the right flank of the armies." He was responsible for the security of the flank of the whole Assault Wing.

Meanwhile the III, IV and V German Armies to the east were engaged in bloody encounters with the III and IV French Armies along the Meuse.

The gap between the wings of the V and IV French Armies was widening.

The IV German Army had been for three days engaged with the French IV Army about Sedan. Appeals were made to III German Army by the IV German Army to come in on the flank of the IV French Army from the north and to this appeal von Hausen, the commander, responded notwithstanding the fact that his orders from General Headquarters directed that he advance in the direction southwest. Complying with this appeal, von Hausen turned his left wing southeast August 29th.

In the handling of the IV German Army there was much to be desired. Wurttemberg deliberately threw his weight toward his left flank virtually holding up his 8th Corps on the right. The fact that he may have been expecting von Hausen to furnish the necessary pressure against Langle's (IV French

Army) flank does not excuse Wurttemberg from fighting his own troops to the best advantage.

Von Hausen was hardly well on his way to assist Wurttemberg when at about 4:00 p. m., August 29th, a call came from von Bulow to turn in his direction, to which von Hausen was unable to respond.

The Battle of St. Quentin-Guise was about as badly handled in regard to cooperation as the Battles on the Sambre. Von Bulow had captured a French Staff officer who had with him a copy of Joffre's order for the attack. Von Bulow had asked von Kluck to turn in towards the Le Fere-Laon line which would have brought the latter square into the left rear of the V French Army. Now, instead of letting the French attack and standing on the defensive meanwhile reinforcing his own left so that at the right time it could envelop from the east, von Bulow attacked all along the line driving back the French V Army which was able to extricate itself from the fight and get back to the Aisne. Von Kluck thereupon turned his left wing (3d and 9th Corps), with which he had intended to attack the French V Army, to the south again and marched towards the lower Oise in the direction of Compiègne. Meanwhile his right wing (4th and 2d Corps) was swinging through Amiens and marching due south towards Clermont (30 kilometers west of Compiègne) in hopes of intercepting the British presumed to be retiring in bad order in that

direction. It was Joffre's intention to assume the offensive on the Aisne-Rheims-Amiens line, but the continued retreat of the British caused him to decide to fall back to the Paris-Verdun line.

By August 31st, Foch's new army was up on the Aisne and opposed the right wing of von Hausen's III Army that had been hammering at the left of the IV French Army and effectively closing the gap that had heretofore existed.

This gap now being closed, there was a regrouping of the French Army and the left corps of the IV Army passed to Foch of the IX Army.

The withdrawal of the IV and III French Armies had been very cleverly handled. Rear Guards covered the retirements from successive sector to successive sector each extricating itself in time and facilitating its withdrawal by the skillful use of the 75 mm. gun.

The fighting extended to the East as far as Verdun; the V German Army getting across the Meuse in the vicinity of Dun on August 30th and 31st. Its action might have been more decisive had not the 5th Corps been pulled out of the line for service on the East front.

It now became apparent to some of the German Army Commands that the French were falling back in accordance with orders and that the retreat was in conformity with a definite plan. Von Bulow may not have thought so and, clearly he did not, if one can judge from the way his army functioned.

The French had skillfully backed out of every pocket. It was apparent, from what was going on, that the German High Command was losing touch more and more. It was still back at Coblenz but now on August 31st, moved up to Luxemburg. It is not understood why the Post of Command was not moved nearer the right flank which now, beyond all question, was the decisive one. Yet, it remained at Luxemburg 240 kilometers from the critical point.

It must be remembered that von Moltke was commanding all the German Armies, and, in addition, had to co-ordinate the action of the German Allies. What should have been done by the Germans was to appoint a separate commander for the West Front, the same as they did on the East Front when they appointed von Hindenburg. General Headquarters then should have been located at some central point—say, Berlin—from which location all movements could have been directed and co-ordinated.

When the Germans became convinced that the Allied withdrawal was according to plan and was not a rout, and, when all their attempts to synchronise envelopments had failed, it seems odd that the High Command did not call a halt on the Aisne long enough to close up and reorganize before starting again. The elder von Moltke rested four days after the battles around Metz and before continuing after MacMahon in 1870, so there was precedent for such action. Von Moltke expressed regret afterwards

that such a halt was not ordered, but his expression came too late. Inside of six days the German Army could have been thoroughly rehabilitated and reinforced. The Guard Reserve and 11th Corps were still at Aix la Chapelle and could have been returned, for Tannenberg was over; and the VI and VII Armies could have been brought around in rear of the western flank, as cars were ready and waiting on the sidings at Strassburg, or at least the VI Army could have been sideslipped through Metz towards the V Army. On August 30th, von Moltke learned of the rail movements from the French right to their left, yet this fact did not cause any action.

Meanwhile, the French and British Armies filled their ranks, the British organized a new corps and the Germans "rushed breathlessly on."

Crossing the Marne.¹

As already stated, von Kluck wheeled his left wing around and continued towards the lower Oise after St. Quentin, moving via Compiègne and Noyon.

The I Army was led south with the hope of finally encircling the British, and on September 1st attacked them at the crossings of the Oise.

Brilliant actions were fought at Villers Cotterets and Compiègne, but the British finally succeeded in getting across the Marne, their line being at first Meaux-La Ferte sous Jouarre, then the right finally fell back via Coulommiers toward Rozoy and faced generally east.

Meanwhile, the Germans learned that the left of the V French Army had let go at Soissons and was retiring toward the southeast. With the further withdrawal of the British, on September 1st, the left wing of von Kluck struck the V French Army near Château-Thierry, and a big action was fought in that vicinity. The French then fell back towards the Seine. On September 2nd and 3rd, the IV and III French Armies fought back between Rheims and Verdun, the IV Army finally withdrawing via the broken and wooded Argonne country toward Vitry and Bar le Duc and the III Army, with right holding Verdun and left in connection with the IV Army, retiring through Bar le Duc.

¹ See Sketch No. 4.

The Forcing of the French Southeastwards from Paris

During the night of the 2d-3d September von Kluck received a wireless message from the Supreme Command: "The intention is to force the French in a southeasterly direction from Paris. The I Army will follow in echelon behind the II Army and will be responsible for the flank protection of the armies."²

This order now joins the issue as to what was von Kluck's main mission. In the original order of deployment for August 18th among other things, von Kluck was warned that he would be expected to protect the flank of the Armies. This admonition was reiterated on August 27th, when von Kluck was directed to move down the west bank of the Oise. It is again reiterated in this order.

The emphasis given this particular task convinces one that it was von Kluck's main task.

It is true that von Kluck had deployed the 2d active and 4th Reserve Corps for protection of his own flank, but the flank protection contemplated by GHQ was an army function not fulfilled by merely protecting his own army flank by a portion thereof.

Von Kluck, in his book, gives out the idea that his main mission was to force the French in a southeasterly direction away from Paris.

² "The March on Paris, 1914"—von Kluck, p. 94.

He states: "It fell to the I Army to apply the principal pressure in forcing back the enemy, as it was the only force that was immediately on his heels and that could exert the necessary compulsion on his line of retreat."³ It is true that at this time von Kluck was a full day's march ahead of the II Army and the latter was echeloned in front of the III Army. One might well ask how von Kluck got one day in advance.

After the Battle of St. Quentin, von Bulow halted a day but von Kluck kept on going, notwithstanding his order to afford protection to the flank of the armies, which is generally executed by echelonment to the rear under the Principle of Mass.

Were one to judge von Kluck solely by the manner in which he carried out the order of September 2-3, which found him a day ahead of the flank of von Bulow, with the only alternative to continuing on, or of stopping for two days to enable von Bulow to catch up and get ahead of him, one might not be so severe, but, to get at the real situation, one must take the series of orders. Had von Kluck complied with the order of August 27th and not rushed after the supposedly routed British, he would not have found himself in the predicament he was when he received the September 2-3 order.

During September 3d von Kluck continued his

³ "The March on Paris, 1914,,—von Kluck, pp. 96 and 97.

advance across the Marne,⁴ his 9th Corps driving the left of the French V Army now under d'Esperey⁵ in confusion through Montmirail. The II Army reached the Marne about September 3d, and von Bulow reported: "That in front of his army the enemy was streaming back south of the Marne in great disorder."

Meanwhile, on September 4th and 5th, von Kluck, still a day ahead, pushed forward, driving the enemy away from Paris.

After the beginning of the movements of September 5th, the following wireless message was received from German General Headquarters at 7:15 a. m. (sent September 4th at 7:00 p. m.): "The I and II Armies are to remain opposite the East Front of Paris; I Army between the Oise and the Marne, holding the passages over the Marne west of Chateau-Thierry, II Army between the Marne and the Seine, holding the passages over the Seine between Nogent and Mery, inclusive; III Army has the line of march, Troyes and eastward." To comply with this order, von Kluck thought it would be allowing "the enemy, whom we were pressing hard, to regain his freedom of action," so von Kluck kept on cover-

⁴ On September 4th, French troops were known to be assembling in force about Dammartin and to the south but von Kluck did not worry about them as he had two corps and cavalry out on that flank. On September 4th, a part of this French force was struck by the 4th Reserve Corps and driven west.

⁵ Franchet d'Esperey succeeded Lanrezac in command of the V Army after St. Quentin.

ing the right with the Independent Cavalry and the 2d Active and 4th Reserve Corps.

This wireless from GHQ had been sent subsequent to the receipt of the wireless from von Kluck stating "the I Army has reached the limits of its powers, due to continual hard fighting and the marching requirements." It will be noted that von Kluck, by this order, was assigned a more passive rôle, undoubtedly due to his statement of the fatigue of his army. It is also noted that this order directs von Kluck to remain between the Oise and Marne, so the inference is that GHQ thought that he was still north of the Marne.

On the evening of September 5th Lieutenant Colonel von Hentsch, from GHQ, arrived with a copy of the order, and for the first time von Kluck knew of the lack of success of the V, VI, and VII Armies and was warned of the probability of the French building up a strong force against his right flank. The following is a copy of the order von Hentsch brought:

"The enemy succeeded in withdrawing from the enveloping attack of the I and II Armies and has reached the neighborhood of Paris with parts of his forces. Reports and other information lead to the conclusion that the enemy is withdrawing troops from the front Toul-Belfort and sending them westwards, and that he is also withdrawing detachments from before the front of our III, IV and V Armies. The driving of the whole French Army in a south-

easterly direction against the Swiss frontier is therefore no longer possible. It must rather be reckoned that the enemy is assembling strong forces in the neighborhood of Paris, creating new formations there for the protection of the Capital and to threaten the right flank of the German Armies.

“The I and II Armies must therefore remain opposite to the East Front of Paris. Their task is to co-operate mutually in offensive action against any hostile enterprise from the neighborhood of Paris.

“The IV and V Armies are still in touch with strong enemy forces. They must endeavor to continue to press them southeast. Thereby the road will be opened for the VI Army over the Moselle between Toul and Epinal. It is not yet possible to foresee whether the IV and V Armies, in conjunction with the VI and VII, will be able to drive any considerable enemy forces against the Swiss frontier.

“The task of the VI and VII Armies remains for the present to fix the enemy forces on their front. An attack is to be made as soon as possible between Toul and Epinal, provision being made against attack from these fortresses.

“The III Army is to advance in the direction of Troyes-Vendeuvres (between Troyes and Bar le Duc). It will be ready to act according to the situation, either in support of the I and II Armies beyond the Seine in a westerly direction, or to assist our left wing in a southerly or southeasterly direction.

“His Majesty therefore orders:

1. The I and II Armies will remain opposite the East Front of Paris, ready to act offensively against any hostile enterprise from the direction of Paris.

“ ‘2. The III Army will advance on Troyes-Vendeuvres.

“ ‘3. The IV and V Armies will, by pressing forward without cessation in a southeasterly direction, open the crossings over the Upper Moselle for the VI and VII Armies. The right flank of the IV Army will advance by Vitry, the right flank of the V Army by Revigny. The IV Army Cavalry Corps will explore in front of the IV and V Armies.

“ ‘4. The task of the VI and VII Armies remains as before.’ ”

Allied Distribution

Complying with the order in regard to regrouping and the occupation of the Paris-Verdun line, before referred to, the British and V French Army withdrew south of the Grand Morin; Foch halted on the Aube; Langle de Cary on the Ornain, and the III Army to the east.

The III Army (Sarrail who succeeded de Ruffey) consisted of the 4th, 5th, 6th Corps, without the 42d Division; one brigade of the 54th Infantry Division; 65th, 67th and 75th Reserve Divisions; 2d and 7th Cavalry Divisions. Front: from Verdun to Revigny.

The IV Army (Langle de Cary): 17th, 12th Corps, Colonial Corps, and the 2d Corps. Front:

south of the Ornain from the left of Sarrail to Sompuis.

The IX Army (Foch), newly organized on August 20th: 9th Corps, consisting of the 17th Infantry Division, Morocco Division, and 52d Reserve Division; 11th Corps, consisting of the 21st and 22d Infantry Divisions, reinforced September 7th by the 18th Infantry Division from Lorraine; 42d Infantry Division, and 60th Reserve Division, as well as the 9th Cavalry Division. Front: Mailly-Sezanne.

The V Army (Franchet d'Esperey): 18th, 3d, 1st, and 10th Corps; group of the 51st, 53d, and 69th Reserve Divisions, Cavalry Divisions, and one brigade of the 2d Cavalry Division.

Main Assault Group

The British Army (Sir John French), consisting of the 1st, 2d, and 3d Corps and a cavalry division of 5 brigades with 5-horse batteries.

The VI Army (Maunoury), by being placed under the Commandant of Paris, was reinforced by the Reserves of the Paris garrison. It included the Lamaze Group (55th and 56th Reserve Divisions and one Morocco brigade); Beautier Group of the 7th Corps (14th Infantry Division and 63d Reserve

(NOTE.—When things were critical on the Ourcq—five battalions were rushed out from Paris in motor cars—hence the legend about the taxi-cab army.)

Division) ; the Ebener Group (61st and 62d Reserve Divisions), which arrived on the 6th; 45th Algerian Division; the 4th Corps from the III Army, which was brought around by rail, arriving on September 6th; Sordet's Cavalry Corps and the cavalry brigade Billet; ten companies of Zouaves, which arrived on the 9th of September.

Reserve: Paris garrison, consisting of 83d, 85th, 89th, and 92d Territorials, and the Renarich Naval Brigade.

The time was ripe for a French counter-stroke if it was to come at all.

The actions from now until about the 14th of September divide themselves into four parts: First, the Battle of Nancy; second, the Battle of the Ourcq and Marne; third, the Battle of Fere Champenoise, and fourth, the Battles around Verdun.

Battle of Nancy.

One must keep in mind the days on which each event occurred, otherwise it will not be apparent what bearing each one had on the other. It will be noticed that there was little or no co-ordination among the various German forces. It will be recalled that the forces of De Castelnau had fallen back from the Lorraine offensive of August 21st to the defenses of Nancy and Toul, followed by the Germans who had been checked by two French counter-attacks on August 25th. With the withdrawal of the Allies on the west from the line of the Somme, the time seemed to be ripe for some activity on the part of the Bavarians, and it was thought that with the envelopment of von Kluck going on, a determined attack against the Nancy defenses might draw troops away from the Allied left, thereby facilitating von Kluck's movements, or, if the French sent troops to hold back von Kluck, the Bavarians might break through the passes near Nancy and take the French armies west of Verdun in reverse. After the failure of the original attempt of the Germans to carry the Mirecourt Gap, a division was started from Metz across the Woevre on about August 30th to seize St. Mihiel, but hearing of the retreat of the Allies from the Somme and the successes farther west, this division was turned south towards Pont-a-Mousson to cover the right of

the troops that were to attack Nancy. The attack on Nancy was made by about five corps, with upwards of two hundred thousand men, and the final grand assault was made on the 6th of September, the day of the beginning of the advance of Maunoury. On September 7th, the attacks had definitely failed, so much so that the Kaiser, who was in that vicinity, returned to Metz. The battle having been settled at Nancy by September 7th, French troops were available to be despatched north to hold the Woevre heights against a menace from Metz, while other troops could be sent to assist at points where needed along the line.¹

This situation is about as good an illustration of the successful use of interior lines as one will find in modern times. We have here another Chancellorsville to a certain extent. The Bavarians attacking at Nancy would correspond to Sedgwick, while Castelnau would correspond to Early; Sarriall and Cary would correspond to Anderson, and the Crown Prince to Hooker. The 5th Corps is blocked at Troyon the same as the 1st Corps, Reynolds', was blocked at Banks Ford. Having checked the Bavarians, the 21st and 15th French Corps go to the assistance of Sarriall and Cary, the same as Jackson and McLaws went to the aid of Anderson. The

¹ In all, seven Corps, two Reserve Divisions and three Cavalry Divisions of the I and II French Armies were transferred to the West before and during the Battle of the Marne.

balance of the fighting differs in detailed movements, but the general result is similar.

Now let us turn to the French left flank and see what was transpiring in that vicinity. Gallieni, Governor of Paris, issued his proclamation for the defense on the 3d of September. On the 2d of September indications of von Kluck's march to the southeastwards began to be observed, and by September 4th Gallieni was so certain that the movement was under way and that an opportunity offered itself for a flank attack that he urged Joffre to begin the counter-attack. There is no need for a discussion of who first conceived of this idea. Gallieni, in his book entitled "Gallieni parle," page 52, says: "It is necessary for me to say that the morning of the 4th was the greatest morning for me, as it was necessary for me to forcefully present and impress my views, my certitudes, for the Generalissimo this date still held firm to his first project of retiring behind the Seine and had transmitted some instructions in consequence. The telephone had played all morning; one is able to say that the Battle of the Marne was caused by the 'coups de telephone.' "

We often have cases in war where a subordinate conceives of an idea and suggests it to the commander and the commander executes it successfully, and afterwards the subordinate claims the glory. We know that Joffre had a movement of this kind in mind if the necessary opportunity was presented,

but since Marshal Foch has said that about everything in war is the execution, we can allow Gallieni credit for the conception, since there is enough left in the execution to make Joffre or anyone else famous. In wars on a large scale there is always glory enough to go around without any one individual claiming it all.

In furtherance of his idea of striking the troops of von Kluck in the flank, Gallieni, on the morning of the 4th of September at about 9 a. m., wrote as follows to Maunoury (commanding VI Army): "I shall give you your marching orders as soon as I know the direction of march of the British Army. Meanwhile be ready to march this afternoon, so as to make an attack tomorrow, the 5th of September, east of Paris." This was telephoned to Joffre, who approved of the action directed. At this time the British and III and IV French Armies were still retreating, while the armies of d'Esperey (V) and Foch (IX) were being reorganized after their rapid retreat. Joffre decided to take Gallieni's advice, and so at 4 p. m. issued the following order:

"(1) Advantage must be taken of the risky situation of the German I Army to concentrate against it the efforts of the Allied armies on our extreme left. All preparations must be made during the 5th for an attack on the 6th of September.

"(2) The following general arrangements are to be carried out by the evening of September 5th:

"(a) All the available forces of the VI Army

northeast of Meaux are to be ready to cross the Ourcq between Lizy and May-en-Multien (north) in the general direction of Chateau-Thierry. The available portions of the 1st Cavalry Corps which are close at hand are to be handed over to General Maunoury for this operation.

“(b) The British Army is to establish itself on the line, Changis-Coulommiers, facing east, ready to attack in the general direction of Montmirail.

“(c) The V Army will close slightly to its left and take up the general line, Courtacon-Esternay-Sezanne, ready to attack, generally speaking, from south to north. The 2d Cavalry Corps will secure connection between the British Army and the V Army.

“(d) The IX Army will cover the right of the V Army by holding the southern outlets of the St. Gond marshes and by placing part of its forces on the plateau north of Sezanne.

“(3) These different armies are to attack on the morning of the 6th of September.

“As to the IV and III Armies, they will be warned on the 6th of the great attack which is about to take place on their left. In consequence, the IV Army is to cease moving southward and must second the operations and take advantage of them by holding the enemy in check, and for this purpose will get into contact with the III Army which, passing out to the north of Revigny, will carry on the offensive westward.”

This order gives quite clearly the general scheme of battle, and it appears to be clear, simple and complete, and such failures as there were resulted from impetuousity or slowness in execution, for example: writers charge Maunoury with attacking too soon and General French with being too slow, and so on.

The acts of this part of the drama of war may be divided into several scenes:

First.—Maunoury attacks and drives in the 4th Reserve Corps.

Second.—Von Kluck, finally alive to danger, turns around suddenly and counter-attacks.

Third.—Von Bulow and von Hausen attack violently and endeavor to throw back Foch and pierce the center.

Fourth.—The IV and V German Armies in the Saulz-Ornain Valley endeavor to dislodge the French right.

“The die was now cast and it only remained for the Franco-British Armies to carry out to the full the tasks assigned them by Joffre. On the morning of the 5th of September, the order for the advance reached the rank and file and was received with great enthusiasm.”

By circulating proclamation among the troops, the High Command strove to bring the urgency of the situation to the attention of the men. Joffre issued the following brief unemotional order to

the troops, which order shorn of all sentimental appeals to home and country runs as follows:

"At the moment when a battle, on which depends the welfare of the country, is about to begin, I wish to inform you that the time for looking to the rear is past. All efforts must be employed in attacking and repelling the enemy. A troop which is not able to advance will hold the ground conquered at all costs and will allow itself to be slain where it stands rather than retire. This is a moment when no faltering will be tolerated."²

² "Histoire de la Guerre 1914-15"; Cornet, p. 207.

Battle of the Ourcq and Marne.¹

On September 4th, von Kluck's right was covered by the 4th Reserve Corps and the 4th Cavalry Division and the balance of his army was advancing in two wings the right consisting of the 2d and 4th Corps and the left consisting of the 3d and 9th Corps. Late in the afternoon of September 4th, this right flank guard struck the advance troops of the French, the Lamaze Group near Dammartin where it had been since September 2d, and drove it back. At this time the Beautier Group (7th Corps) was at Louvres but did not come into action; it let the chance to completely turn the German right, slip.

The 4th German Cavalry Division also drove off attacks at Bregy. Not wishing to come into the zone of operations of Paris, the German line of advance was swung off to the east. By the night of September 5th, the two German wings were south of the Grand Morin. These movements were carried out notwithstanding the orders received on the morning of September 5th with regard to the defensive flank.²

¹ See Sketches Nos. 4 and 5 and General Map.

² As a result the 4th German Corps was 45 kilometers from the place to which it was sent into line on the Ourcq; the 3d Corps 45 kilometers and the 9th Corps 90 kilometers. The quickest these corps could arrive at the points required was respectively: 4th, night of the 7th; 3d, morning of the 8th; and 9th, evening of the 8th.

September 6th

On the morning of September 6th, Maunoury attacked with the Beautier Group of the 7th Corps on the left and the Lamaze Reserve Corps group on the right, with one division of the 4th Corps and a cavalry brigade to the south of the river keeping up touch with Sir John French. The German 4th Reserve Corps was taken somewhat off its guard and was gradually forced back. (German accounts state that it held its ground.) The French made repeated attempts to turn the German right but were prevented by the 4th Cavalry Division. The 3d German Infantry Division of the 2d Corps arrived on the left of the 4th Reserve Corps at about noon and the 4th Division, under the Corps Commander von Linsingen, came into action at the line Trocy-Etavigny (near Trocy), on the right of the 4th Reserve Corps. During the day the fighting was most desperate on both sides; the French 75's showed their superiority over the German Field Guns and had no difficulty in silencing them but the German heavies in turn played havoc with the French 75's and advancing infantry.

Notwithstanding, the Corps of Lamaze advanced by night as far as the line Chambry-Barcy-Marcilly. (Towns on a line north from Meaux not shown on map.)

Meanwhile, the 7th Corps was attacking in the direction of Acy-en-Multien. At daybreak, it

seized the village of St. Souplets and pushed forward with considerable speed due to the fact that the German 4th Reserve Corps was occupied with the Corps of Lamaze to the south. Von Gronau, commanding the 4th Reserve Corps earlier in the day sent urgent appeals to von Kluck for assistance which came in the form of the 3d and 4th Divisions of the 2d Corps already mentioned. French aviators spotted these columns crossing the Marne and they appeared to be reinforcing the left of the 4th Reserve Corps which was partially correct; so the 7th French Corps pushed its attack and by nightfall it had connected up with the left of Lamaze near Marcilly with left thrown forward a little to the south of Nanteuil. Von Kluck was now hurrying the 4th Corps north but these troops were delayed by the division of the 4th French Corps (8th Division) near Meaux.

The Germans were now alive to the menace to their right flank by these attacks of Maunoury, but the latter was not in a position to take full advantage of his superior position due to the fact that the attack had been launched before all his troops were concentrated.

While this was transpiring north of the Marne, von Kluck's left wing (3d and 9th Corps) were engaged on the Courtacon-Esternay front against the left of the V French Army while to their right was the cavalry corps of von der Marwitz holding up the British. A decided gap had been driven in

the hostile line separating the British right from the left of Franchet. Into this gap the 2d and 4th German Corps were advancing when orders from von Kluck pulled them to the north. The pressure being relinquished the British who were advancing cautiously accelerating their movements slightly.

The British Advance

It will be recalled that the British were to advance east towards Montmirail. On the evening of September 5th, large enemy bivouacs were seen in the neighborhood of Coulommiers, Rebais, La Ferte Gaucher, and Dagny (towns on and to the south of the Grand Morin). Early next morning, September 6th, a heavy artillery fire was opened by the Germans and about noon the British advance guards encountered German cavalry supported by small infantry groups (jagers) and artillery. Sir John French states that about noon the British noticed that the German advance was not being pushed vigorously "and later . . . as we attempted to close with them, it was discovered that a general retreat was in progress, covered by rear guards."³ It is certain that early in the afternoon there was a noticeable slackening of the efforts of the German I Army to push south and east. The 4th Corps, Sixt von Arnim, that had been operating to the south of the Grand Morin was ordered, during the

³ "1914"—Viscount French, p. 121.

late afternoon, to recross the river at Coulommiers and proceed towards La Ferte sous Jouarre. The 2d Corps had already withdrawn. The British then lost no time in seizing the heights on the Grand Morin west of Coulommiers, from which the German heavy guns, during the morning, had held up their advance and by evening the British line was Dagny, south of Coulommiers, Maisoncelles (not shown on map). On the whole the British had seen little fighting this day and had captured a few machine guns and taken some prisoners, but they had advanced about eight kilometers.

The V French Army

It will be recalled that in the orders of Joffre of September 5th for the general attack, the V French Army was to attack direction north.

The idea was for this army to attack with right forward, for the purpose of cooperating with the VI French Army, and entirely turn the right of the German II Army and completely envelop the I German Army. The army moved forward at daylight disposed as follows: From left to right—18th, 3d, 1st and 10th Corps. Reserve divisions brought up the rear in the second line. Immediately a violent battle developed all along the line, due to the fact that the Germans had also received orders to advance.

In the fighting, the French got the better of their enemy generally. On the left, the 18th Corps seized

Courtacon, being assisted by Conneau's 2d Cavalry Corps which was operating on its left and keeping up liaison with the British. The cavalry after performing their part of the task admirably, camped for the night at Choisy, southwest of La Ferte Gaucher. The 3d Corps, after a particularly fierce artillery preparation, captured the village just southwest of Esternay, while the 10th Corps got into a position to enfilade the Germans holding Esternay and, after nightfall, drove them out and forced their right forward so that connection with the left of Foch's army was effected at Charleville. Von Bulow had been quite hardly put and had to call in his 10th Reserve Corps to check the 1st and 10th French Corps.

In rear of the 10th Reserve Corps was the 13th Division of the 7th Corps. The 10th Corps was sent forward to reinforce the 10th Reserve Corps and brought the German retirement to a halt about ten kilometers southeast of Montmirail. At this point the advance of the right wing of the French V Army was brought to a halt. The main assault wing of the German Guard and 10th Corps were attacking the left of Foch's army consisting of the 42d Division and the Moroccans.

The II German and IX French Armies

The 19th German Division of the German 10th Corps forced the crossing of the Petit Morin while the 20th Division of the same Corps to the left

crossed the St. Gond Marsh. The 9th French Corps to the east fared no better than the 42d Division and Moroccans and their advance guards north of the Marsh were driven back upon the main body to the south.

The 1st Guard Infantry Division, still farther east was held up by the heavy artillery fire coming from the south of the marsh so that on its front the battle was a standoff. The 2d Guard Infantry Division was to move around the marsh to the east but was checked by strong resistance near Morains le Petit. The 2d Guard Infantry Division called to the III Army for help and as a result the 32d Infantry Division was diverted to the west for that purpose.

The III German Army

Meanwhile the left wing of the 12th Corps, and the 19th Corps, advanced south and by nightfall had reached Coolé on the Fere Champenoise-Vitry Road. The 11th French Corps in its front had been driven back. The diverting of the 32d Infantry Division left a gap in the German line which the French failed to take advantage of.

The IV German and IV French Armies

The German IV Army continued its advance southeast and encountered the IV French Army which was under orders to advance with the III Army.

The IV French Army was not very well placed for an attack since its left was in the air and only supported by the 9th Cavalry Division. The battle was in the nature of a *rencontre*. The 17th French Corps advancing from the direction of Humbauville-Vitry line struck the 19th Saxons Corps.⁴

The French advance was preceded by an artillery duel, in which German heavy guns posted on the heights north of Vitry endeavored to crush the French 75's on the opposite slope.

The 12th and Colonial Corps, heavily attacked, held the line pretty well although the Germans tried to break through the front of the Colonial Corps. As a result, the Germans succeeded in getting across the Ornain.

The V German and III French Armies

The Crown Prince's attack had for its objective Revigny and Bar-le-Duc. Orders were issued on the afternoon of September 5th for the attack at dawn and at that time the German troops moved forward. The 5th French Corps on the left was driven back since the line in this section had been weakened by the withdrawal of the 4th Corps which had been sent to assist Maunoury and the British. The 15th Corps was to arrive next day to take its place, coming from Nancy, the fighting there having virtually ended with the grand attack on this same day. Further to the right, the 6th French Corps

⁴ 10 kilometers S. W. of Vitry.

endeavored to carry out its attack, but was unable to gain ground, but the 72d Division from Verdun did meet with some success.

On the east side of the Meuse, one Division of the 5th German Corps, 33d Division and a Bavarian Brigade, began an attack on the barrier forts namely Troyon and Les Paroches near St. Mihiel. The 5th Corps had at its disposal heavy field Howitzers and Austrian Mortars but was short of ammunition.

Summary of the 6th of September

The picture of the situation at nightfall is as follows:

On the Ourcq, von Kluck with about 3½ Infantry Divisions was being enveloped by Maunoury with about 7½ Divisions.

The 2d and 4th German Corps were being withdrawn while the British and left of the V French Army, were cautiously pushing forward into the gap being held up by the von der Marwitz, Cavalry Corps and Infantry Rear Guards. (Marwitz had 4 jager battalions with him as an integral part of the corps.)

In front, von Bulow had succeeded in driving back the left of Foch's Army and was well on the way toward driving back Foch's right but the center held. Von Bulow had 7½ Divisions while against him all along the line were 15 French divisions.

Von Hausen was driving southeast towards Troyes in compliance with orders and had gotten across the main road. The main direction of Wurttemberg (IV Army) was towards Vitry while the Crown Prince was attacking towards Revigny.

Wurttemberg was throwing his weight towards his left, helping the Crown Prince, instead of towards the right to help von Hausen where he could have done the most good. The weak point in the French line was between Foch's right and the left of Langle de Cary, yet apparently Wurttemberg did not appreciate it. He had committed the same error on the Meuse earlier in the operation.

Under the German GHQ orders of September 5th, the function of the IV and V Armies, and part of the III, was to exert pressure towards the southeast, in order to help the VI and VII Armies over the Upper Moselle. Naturally the Germans' mass should have been thrown in a direction to make this possible, but instead of this the IV and V Armies made frontal attacks all along the line. In the Woevre, it was possible to have seized the Barrier Forts and thereby to have cut off Verdun, had sufficient artillery been made available. This force attacking Forts Troyon and Les Paroches was not active, and apparently expected the attacks of the IV and V Armies, across the Meuse, to facilitate their advance, instead of figuring that their attack might facilitate the advance of the IV and V Armies, the main forces. Meanwhile the VI and VII Armies

were attacking vigorously against Nancy, and the grand assault was made on this very day, but pressure elsewhere was not so strong that the French were forced to materially weaken their Nancy force. Of all the days when the IV and V German Armies should have been most active, the 6th of September was the day. *If there ever was a time when German GHQ should have taken charge and co-ordinated the efforts of the armies, it was on September 6th.*

September 7th

For September 7th, the greater part of the II and the III German Armies were to unite in a desperate effort to crush Foch and turn him back from connection with the army of Langle, and von Kluck, with the remainder of his army, was to envelop Maunoury, while the British and V French Armies were to be held off by cavalry and small infantry forces.

From what had happened on September 6th, and the stiffening of the German line, Maunoury realized that the Germans were aware of their predicament and were sending in reinforcements, and that if he wished to reap the greatest benefit from his surprise, he must act promptly and vigorously. Accordingly, the army was set in motion at dawn, and at first made considerable progress, but it soon became apparent that to secure a decision would be difficult. The German 2d Corps, that had recrossed the Marne on the evening before, continued the

movement of the 4th Division towards Etavigny and the 3d by Varreddes (south of Lizy) to the relief of the 4th Reserve Corps. During the day of September 6th, the 4th Corps was also withdrawn across the Marne, and at 10:30 p. m. was ordered to move to a position to attack across the line Rozoy-en-Multien-Trocy. "Thus, on the morning of the 7th of September, the 2d Corps, the 4th Reserve Corps (still without its Brussels Brigade), and the 4th Corps stood between the Therouane and the Gregoguel (tributary of the Ourcq on east bank), with their units rather intermingled, with the 4th Cavalry Division immediately to the north of them."⁵

Meanwhile the left wing of the VI French Army was attacking the right of the 4th Reserve Corps, and by four o'clock in the afternoon had gained possession of a hill immediately west of Etavigny (between May and Bregy). Contemporaneously with this success, the 61st Reserve Division appeared on the French left at Villiers-St. Genest (about 3 ks. southwest of Betz), together with the 1st French Cavalry Corps. This attack of the French was met by the German 2d and 4th Corps, which had attacked also, pivoting on its left, at 12:15 p. m.⁶

⁵ "The March on Paris, 1914," von Kluck, p. 123.

⁶ Toward noon on the 7th of September, for the better functioning of the troops fighting on the Ourcq, the I German Army was divided into three groups; the Northern Group commanded by General Sixt von Arnim, the Central Group commanded by General von Gronau, and the Southern Group commanded by General von Trossel.

The activity of the French VI Army had alarmed von Kluck so much that at 11:15 a. m. he sent von Bulow the following message: "Assistance of 3d and 9th Corps on Ourcq is urgently required; enemy considerably reinforced. Send corps in direction La Ferte Milon and Crouy."⁷

Pursuant to von Kluck's request, the 3d and 9th Corps were released and started for the crossings of the Ourcq designated in the telegram, with orders to be in position to support the corps on the Ourcq by daylight on the morning of September 8th. On the morning of September 7th a battalion of the infantry brigade of the 4th Reserve Corps and a battalion of the 2d Grenadier Regiment arrived at Villers Cotterets, and were attached to the 4th German Corps.

With this withdrawal of the 3d and 9th Corps, the right of von Bulow was exposed, but to meet it he had drawn back the 10th Reserve Corps and had echeloned the 7th Corps (less 14th Infantry Division) in its rear.

The 9th German Corps at first was ordered to the Dollau Creek, so that by bending back the right of the II Army to Montmirail the connection could be kept up. By late in the afternoon, as the menace to von Kluck's right became more and more threatening, the 9th Corps was ordered to the right of the I Army. The question may quite properly be asked

⁷ "The March on Paris, 1914," von Kluck, p. 122.

why von Kluck, when he found the menace to his right so great, did not withdraw across the Ourcq and assume the defensive—he would have closed the gap between his left and the right of von Bulow into which Sir John French was slowly moving.

The British Army

Meanwhile the British Army was advancing slowly, notwithstanding the urgent appeals of Joffre and Gallieni for haste. Sir John French asked for and obtained the 8th French Division to protect his left flank—this division came by rail from Sarraill on September 6th and was originally intended for the left of Maunoury, where the balance of the 4th Corps, to which it belonged, had gone.

The German cavalry and jagers fought a very effective delaying action, so much so that by night they were holding the northern bank of the Grand Morin.

The V French Army

As the 3d and 9th Corps withdrew across the Marne, the pressure was felt to relax, especially in front of the left of the V Army, so that the advance of the 18th and 3d Corps became really a pursuit. They were able to advance to the line La Ferte-Gaucher-Trefols (east, not shown on map), a gain of about six miles. At about noon, Foch, who was being violently attacked, asked for assistance from the V Army. The 10th Corps, which was on the

right of the V Army, was ordered to bear off towards its right to afford the assistance required, while the 1st Corps conformed. By night the main body of the 10th Corps was about Charleville in touch with the left of the IX Army. The day had been quite successful for the V French Army.

The IX French Army

Early in the morning, the Germans attacked all along the line and, east of the St. Gond marshes, heavy artillery came into action, replied to in kind by the French. The 11th Corps on the right held its ground; the 9th Corps in the center, protected by the marshes, maintained itself without difficulty, but on the left the 42d and Moorish Divisions were hard put to hold off the attacks of the Germans' 10th Corps. Due to the timely assistance of the 10th Corps from the V French Army, they (the left of Foch's Army) were able to hold their ground.

The IV French Army

This was a critical day for the IV Army. The left held its ground due to the timely arrival of local reserves. The center held against violent attacks, but the right was driven back and by night the 2d Corps (right of the IV Army) was outflanked by the continued efforts of two German Corps and the attackers were in possession of Sermaize, dangerously threatening the connection between the III and IV French Armies. This near break through

was at the junction point of the two French armies and in the vicinity of the place from which the 4th Corps had been withdrawn to go to aid of Maunoury.

The III French Army

This day witnessed merely more or less desultory fighting between this army and the army of the Germany Crown Prince. Had the latter been as active as the IV Army, the III French Army might have been cut off.

Summary of the 7th of September

The German situation at nightfall looked good for decisive results on the morrow.

Von Kluck was in position to threaten Maunoury with envelopment.

The German Cavalry had held back the British and V French Armies who had the Petit Morin and the partially bridgeless Marne to cross before they could become dangerous; the right of the IX French Army was in danger; the right of the IV French Army had been pierced; troops were advancing from Metz toward Fort Troyon in Sarrail's rear, and Maubeuge had fallen during the course of the day, thereby releasing the investing troops, but what is more, enabling the Germans to reopen the railroads passing through that point and their supply system to resume its functioning normally.

This situation probably explains the two Ger-

man proclamations that were found dated the evening of September 7th, stating among other things, "Everything depends on the results of tomorrow."

Lieutenant General Tulff signed one at Vitry-le-Francois worded as follows: "7 September, 10 hours, 30. The object of our long and arduous marches has been achieved. The principal French troops have been forced to accept battle after having been continuously forced back. The great decision is undoubtedly at hand. Tomorrow then all the German forces as well as all our army corps, will be engaged on the front from Paris to Verdun. To save the welfare and honor of Germany, I expect every officer and man, notwithstanding the hard and heroic fight of the last few days, to do his duty unswervingly and to his last breath. Everything depends on the results of tomorrow."⁸ The above order was issued by the Corps Commander of the 8th Corps and a copy of a similar order was found among the effects of the commander of the 7th Corps. The interesting point is that this order, issued on September 7th, referring to tomorrow must mean September 8th as the critical day. By the night of September 7th, von Kluck was out of the pocket and enveloping Maunoury and the situation was not unfavorable to the Germans, so to them the decisive day was September 8th.

⁸ Histoire de la Guerre, 1914-1915, Cornet, p. 208, and Nelson's History of the War, Vol. 2, p. 158.

The Battle on the German Right

SEPTEMBER 8TH

The deployment of the VI French Army at this time was about as follows: The approximate line was Betz-Etavigny-Pusieux-Marcilly-Chambry (line due south from Betz; except Betz and Etavigny, towns not shown on the map), and thence to the south. The left flank held by the 61st Reserve Division and the 1st Cavalry Corps was refused. The 7th Corps held the center from about Etavigny to Marcilly, while the 45th Division continued the line south, and the 55th and 56th Reserve Divisions and the Moorish Brigade were on the extreme right.

The Germans were holding their positions unshaken. The 3d and 9th Corps were advancing to reinforce the right, the artillery with covering cavalry in advance; the 3rd Corps with the 6th Infantry Division towards the right on Antilly (near Betz) via Mareuil, the 5th Division farther south, while the 9th Corps was moving via La Ferte around to the north to complete the envelopment. Troops were approaching from the north and on September 8th had only 18 kilometers to go to be in position to strike the rear of Maunoury through Baron.

Lepel's 43d Reserve Brigade of the 4th Reserve Corps (The Brussels Brigade) arrived at Berberie on the evening of September 8th being followed by the 10th Landwehr Brigade; two lines of communi-

cation battalions arrived at Villers Cotterets and part of the investing troops from Maubeuge.

It is clear that the numerical superiority of Maunoury was gone or about to be gone. Nevertheless he resumed the attack. His plan was to attack with the 45th Division from the line Barcy-Marcilly (just north of Meaux) towards Etrepilly and Varreddes (in the direction of Lizy) with the view of holding as many Germans in the neighborhood of Meaux, thereby facilitating the attack of the French left wing, namely the 61st Division and Cavalry Corps who were endeavoring to envelop the German right. The task of the 7th French Corps was to hold the line between the two flank movements at all costs.

The Germans attacked mostly against the 7th French Corps and the fighting between Etavigny and Marcilly was almost as severe as any on record. In addition, the Germans heavily attacked the French left at Etavigny and le Bas Bouillancy (near Etavigny) and occupied Thury-en-Valois (near Betz) and Betz. At Acy-en-Multien the struggle went on all day with extreme violence, and by evening the Germans were still holding the village itself, while the French were in occupation of a little triangular wood which commanded the entrance to the village and was full of corpses of both sides. The pressure on the left was so great that the 7th Division of the 4th French Corps had to be shoved into the line

between the 61st Division and the 7th Corps. The 1st Cavalry did not do much on this day apparently.

By the evening of September 8th, the VI French Army was brought to a standstill and, with the troops available at the conclusion of the fighting, the Germans decided "on the morrow upon the enveloping attack of General von Quast with the 9th Corps, the 6th Infantry and 4th Cavalry Divisions, from the wooded country north of Curvergnon (located northwest of Betz a short distance). The infantry brigade of von Lepel was to press forward from Berberie towards Baron, west of Nanteuil, and the group of General Sixt von Arnim—the 16th Infantry Brigade, and the 7th and 4th Infantry Divisions—would, if he thought fit, cooperate by taking the offensive. The strength of this wing of attack was therefore five and a half infantry divisions and the 4th Cavalry Division, in addition to Lepel's infantry brigade."⁹

EVENING OF THE 8TH

By the close of the day, Maunoury was "no longer fighting for victory but only to prevent his own defeat." Even the official French Press Report made the following admission: "On the evening of September 8th, it became clear that our movements towards the east had failed. Instead of turning the German right wing, Maunoury was obliged to take care not to be enveloped himself."

⁹ "The March on Paris, 1914," von Kluck, pp. 133-134.

“On the evening of September 8th, the 5th Cavalry Division (French) made a surprise attack from Villers Cotterets upon the flying field of the I Army near Le Ferte Milon, just as the Command of the I Army was returning from the battle front. Officers and chauffeurs seized their carbines. The advance guard of the 17th Infantry Division, coming up, soon put an end to the nocturnal phantom. The liaison of the I Army with the rear remained undisturbed, however.”

With the I Army, it would seem that another day would bring victory and it is an actual fact that Maunoury on the night of September 8th contemplated retiring to the Monthyon-St. Souplets-Le Plessis-Belleville Line (N. W. & S. E. through Dammartin). It is understood that the order was issued during the next day but its execution was cancelled when the Aviators reported von Kluck marching off. The French were also out of artillery ammunition.

The British Army

The direction of advance of the British Army was towards Nogent-l'Artaud as a preliminary to a further movement towards Chateau-Thierry.¹⁰ The advance led across the Petit Morin between La Ferte-sous-Jouarre and Sablonnières (a short distance up stream from La Tretoire). The German

¹⁰ The British axis of advance laid down in Joffre's original order was east but subsequent events caused it to be changed to the north.

cavalry, supported by infantry and some heavy artillery, made quite a determined stand on the river. The German Guard Rifles, attached to the Guard Cavalry, entrenched themselves at Orly (on the Petit Morin, S. W. La Ferte) and remained until nearly the whole force was captured. The 2d Division of the 1st Corps on the right struck considerable opposition, but the 3d Corps on the left, assisted by some French guns and British howitzers, attacked on the line Signy-Signets (West of La Ferte)-La Ferte-sous-Jouarre.

This attack was successful and all that prevented the 3d Corps from crossing the river was the destruction of the bridges. By evening the British had made good the Petit Morin and were on the line west and south of La Ferte-sous-Jouarre along the general line of the main road to Montmirail as far as Viels Maison (north of the Petit Morin, N. W. of Montmirail).

The V French Army and II German Army

The right wing of the II German Army refused, as it was, had a very quiet day. It consisted of the 13th Division under von Einem and the 10th Reserve Corps. The French V Army had been ordered to secure the line of the Petit Morin east and west of Montmirail. No difficulty was experienced until the river was reached when the Germans showed every evidence of stubbornly disputing the crossing. However, after dark the Germans withdrew

and the French moved in. The 3d French Corps at this point had a bitter fight of from seven to eight hours while the 18th French Corps farther west had an easier time and got across the river near Le Celle (west of Montmirail) and by night was north of the river on the line through Marchais (west of Montmirail).

The 18th Corps forced the passage at La Celle and by night was on the line of Marchais (west of Montmirail north of the river). The 3d Corps encountered more difficulty at Montmirail for the Germans had many guns in action. On the right the 1st Corps reached Vauchamps, east of Montmirail. The 10th Corps on the extreme right in supporting the IX Army crossed the river north of Charleville and were facing east and threatening von Bulow's right. The V Army now held Montmirail and considerable distance east and west. Von Bulow's P. C. was at Montmort.

The IX French Army

The German Guard and other select troops were massed opposite the center of the line between Sezanne and Fere Champenoise in the region of the St. Gond marshes, with the object of turning back Foch's left. You will recall that von Bulow was to pass through Montmirail and his general direction was towards Marigny (S. E.), so this would throw him against the left of the IX Army—as a matter of fact the right of Foch's Army was the

one that came nearest being turned. The 42d and Moorish Divisions clung desperately to the outskirts of the Mondemont heights and plateau overlooking the marshes. The 10th Corps and right wing of the Guard Corps attacked again and again but the French hung on, replying to each thrust by a counter-stroke. "It is related how, when at a critical moment a subordinate commander reported that his troops were so worn out as to be incapable of further efforts, General Foch replied merely with a curt order to attack at once." This spirit of refusing to acknowledge defeat resulted in the 42d Division and the 10th French Corps, not only repulsing the German attacks, but actually gaining ground. The 9th Corps, covered by the marshes, still held their southern edge, but further to the right the 11th Corps was in difficulty.

Attacked by the left wing of the 2d Guard Division and the 32JD (Jager Division) and 2d (RD) Reserve Division of von Hausen's III Army, the corps was driven back to the line Corroy-Gourgancan, about 12 kilometers. Foch had to move his P. C. back from Pleurs to Plancy on the Aube. The 11th Corps halted behind the stream, La Maurienne, where, reinforced by a reserve division, it checked and drove back the attackers. On the right of the 9th Cavalry Division, operating on the French maneuver field of Mailly, had maintained touch with the IV Army and supported an attack by the latter on Sompuis. *The night of September*

8th looked pretty dark for the IX Army and seemed like the prelude to a disaster.

The Two IV Armies

The 2d French Corps was attacked heavily near Sermaize by two German corps who tried to open up the breach already made the day before and, turning to the right, to roll up the 2d Corps while another German Corps held it in front. The timely arrival of a brigade of the 15th Corps from Alsace enabled the 2d Corps to maintain itself. A little later Hausen's 19th Saxon Corps hit the French 17th Corps, which gave way a little after fierce fighting. It was encouraged to hold on by news of the arrival of the 21st Corps from the Vosges. By the evening of this date the 18th and 43d Divisions of this corps were concentrated a few miles south of Sompuis and Dampierre (near Sompuis, not shown on map), respectively.

The III French Army and V German Army

The 15th Corps was filling in the gap between the III and IV Armies while the 5th Corps gained some ground towards Liamont (N. E. of Revigny), but elsewhere Sarraill was strictly on the defensive. However, a new danger was looming up—the German forces reported in the Woevre were opening up with artillery on Fort Troyon. If these troops were successful, Verdun would be cut off and the III Army turned. Luckily troops were now arriv-

ing from the Nancy battlefield and the 73rd Division, with the 2nd Cavalry Division and Reservists of the 15th Corps, covered Sarrail's rear.

Summary of the 8th of September

The night of the eighth, brought both armies face to face with the possibility of victory or defeat. Von Kluck was out of difficulty and threatening Maunoury with envelopment; Sir John French's left had crossed the Marne but the special infantry detachment of von Lochow was holding him on the river; there was a gap (filled with cavalry and infantry detachments) of about 35 kilometers between the left of von Kluck and right of von Bulow; von Bulow's right was drawn back but his left was successful and the right of Foch had been forced back so that the latter's front was facing east; the 17th French Corps on the left of Cary had been forced back slightly but the 21st Corps from Alsace was coming up; the right of Cary and left of Sarrail had been driven asunder but the 15th Corps was coming up from Alsace; and the German 5th Corps' attack on Troyon and the Meuse Heights forts was being threatened in flank by troops coming up from Toul, being released from the II Army.

Take it all in all, it is believed that the chances for victory on the morrow were about equal.

The Decisive Day

September 9th¹—I German Army

The Assault Wing under von Quast advanced with its right wing from the woods of Crepy with an enveloping attack towards Nanteuil. At the same time, the 43rd Reserve Infantry Brigade pushed south on Nanteuil via Baron and the 10th Landwehr towards Crepy. The advance continued until about two p. m. against the weak resistance of the enemy. The front west of the Ourcq held, but unfavorable reports from von Bulow about the falling back of his Independent Cavalry Corps No. 2 and the withdrawal of his right caused von Kluck to order a defensive flank by his left Group from Crouy to Coulombs, west of Chateau-Thierry. This force (5th Infantry Division) together with the von Krawel detachment from the 9th Corps enabled von der Marwitz with Independent Cavalry Corps No. 2, to effectively stop the British. The withdrawal of the I Army's left, west of the Ourcq, was unfortunate as it was misunderstood by the troops as being an involuntary retreat. It seems that at that time von Krawel and von der Marwitz were holding back the British effectively.

Meanwhile, the von Quast Assault Group had arrived at Villers St. Genest (just southwest of Betz)

¹ See Sketch No. 5.

while the Lepel Brigade was attacking towards Nanteuil.

This was the condition in the I Army at noon on September 9th, about the time von Hentsch appeared at its Headquarters at Mareuil.

Before von Kluck was a jumbled together mass of approximately six Infantry and four Cavalry Divisions. It has been pretty well established that the order for the withdrawal of the Maunoury Army had been issued by Joffre and was only annulled when it was discovered that the Germans were withdrawing. That the French were in retreat, there can be no doubt for numerous eye witnesses to what was transpiring within their lines confirm it. The following is a typical statement: "I opened fire with a success which had never been attained before on great masses of the French, who were streaming backwards. All was in confusion there. Many men were left lying on the ground. The masses streamed hastily back to Fresny le Lust, I observed the scene looking down from a high heap of straw and was actually intoxicated with the victory. Then I heard of an order to the Infantry that the pursuit was not to be continued any further."

A French Colonel who participated in this part of the battle confirms the above report and a Swiss Observer, in addition to confirming the statement that the French contemplated retiring and had actually issued the order, stated further that the

French supply of artillery ammunition had become exhausted.

We may conclude, consequently, that at the time Lieutenant Colonel von Hentsch, GHQ representative arrived, that there was nothing in the situation of the I Army calling for a retirement.

Von Bulow's II Army

The movements in the II Army on the 9th of September are the direct reflection of the mental attitude of its commander. The withdrawal of the 3d and 9th Corps by von Kluck and the resulting gap created were having a bad effect upon von Bulow and he was becoming very much depressed. It must be borne in mind that von Bulow's knowledge of how troops should be handled was learned from the handling of them at Imperial Maneuvers. Von Bulow was the "Master of Imperial Maneuvers." He was not familiar with battlefield conditions so that when a gap was unquestionably made between his right and von Kluck's left he came under the influence of maneuver rulings which would have called for a withdrawal.

There was nothing in the situation of the II Army calling for action of this kind and had von Bulow been in communication with the commanders of the armies on his flank he might have learned this (he had no wire communication with von Kluck at all, everything was radio). It does not appear that von Bulow visited neighboring headquarters to

talk matters over nor did other commanders visit him. This was not confined to von Bulow alone for the IV Army was out of communication with the III Army at a time when the two Headquarters were two miles apart and there was no interchange of personal liaison.

Von Bulow on the evening of the 7th, radioed GHQ that his army had only a battle force of three corps left. During the day of September 8th, he remained at his advance report center at Fromentiers (south of Montmort). "The far from pretty pictures behind the front after a battle lasting three days oppressed the spirits of the gray-haired instructor of the Army in the strictest old Prussian discipline.² The brief wireless messages annoyed him. Everything was going well on his left and the French were being driven back in confusion so that von Lauenstein, Chief of Staff for von Bulow, sent word to von Einem commanding the right wing to be prepared to attack and that von Bulow in person would be in Sezanne in the evening. When von Einem protested against the attack, von Bulow again became depressed and cancelled the order so far as the right was concerned. This is the mental attitude of von Bulow as he returned to his Headquarters at Montmort and met von Hentsch, emissary of G.H.Q.

Favorable accounts were coming in of the work

² Baumgarten-Crusius.

of the 14th Division and 10th Reserve Corps on the right of the center who were advancing, and of the Guard which was attacking from the east. The French retired in rout and the villages of Mondement and Allemont fell into German hands. The attack of the left wing, in conjunction with the von Kirchback Group of the III Army (right group of III Army) was progressing famously and was driving the French before it.

However, just about this time in came a report from von Einem to the effect that he was giving up Montmirail and the line of the Dollau, and was withdrawing to the line of the Condé-Montmirail railroad (railroad running north from Montmirail). And then, when aviators reported the advance of five hostile columns toward the Marne between Le Ferte and Chateau-Thierry, the question of retirement was finally decided.

When von Hentsch arrived at von Bulow's Headquarters on the evening of September 8th, he sent the following wireless to GHQ: "Situation on the right of II Army serious but not hopeless."

Von Bulow's mind was made up, and, after a sleepless night, in conference with von Lauenstein on the morning of September 9th, he decided to order the retirement. He sent word to the I Army of his action by wireless at 11:45 a. m.; to the III Army at 2:45 p. m., after he had already ordered the right group of the III Army to withdraw at 1 o'clock. What von Bulow's authority was for issu-

ing orders to a part of von Hausen's army without consulting the latter is not clear. It makes no difference what instructions von Hentsch had received from GHQ in so far as the II Army was concerned, von Bulow ordered the retirement himself, as his mind had been made up before von Hentsch arrived. Why von Bulow ordered his right to retire before he did his left, is not clear, since such action had the tendency to further widen the gap between the I and II German Armies.

The Left of the II and Right of the III German Armies

Army Headquarters No. 3 ordered a continuation of the attack in the morning. When Lieutenant Colonel von Hentsch passed through he reported to GHQ: "Position and point of view of the III Army entirely favorable." The Right Group, under von Kirchback, attacked to the southwest, assisting the 2d Guard Division of the II Army. The direction of the attack was towards the Heights southwest of Gourganccon, and the attack progressed well, the French being driven out and retiring in rout, leaving many prisoners behind. An urgent appeal came at about 11 a. m. from the II Army for help, so the right wing, III Army, turned farther to the west. Meanwhile the center of the III Army (23d Reserve Division) took Mailly in the morning, and by noon had taken the Heights south of Mailly, while the French were retreating towards Salon.

The left wing had a harder time, the 23d Jager Division attacking towards Sompuis and the 19th Corps toward Courdemanges, southwest of Vitry.

The French artillery greatly annoyed the attackers all day, but at nightfall the Germans had been able to establish themselves on their objectives.

By nightfall the situation on the right of Foch was so bad that it is understood that Joffre had already issued the order for Foch to retire when just in time word came to the French GHQ that von Kluck was retiring. During all this time, while everything was going badly with the IX French Army, Foch was optimistic to a superlative degree. At the time when the III German Army's center was passing into Salon and right was moving into Connantre, Foch is supposed to have sent a telegram to Joffre couched in the following words:

"My center is giving way. My right wing is yielding. Situation brilliant. I attack in the morning."

This was the superlative of optimism which could only be justified if success followed. John Pope, of the Federal Army, was equally as optimistic, but failure followed his messages to Halleck, and he was ridiculed on account of them forever afterwards.

The situation in Foch's IX Army at this time was about as follows: The 10th Corps from the V Army relieved the 42d Division, which was exhausted—the latter moved in reserve at Linthes (on road half way between Sezanne and Fere Champenoise).

The Morocco Division and 9th Corps swung the line to the south, passing just west of Connantre; the line was then continued east, south of the Maurienne, by the 11th Corps as far as Salon; from thence on, by the 18th Division, formerly Foch's Army reserve which arrived from Lorraine on the 7th, towards the east where it connected with the 9th Cavalry Division.

At about 4 p. m. Foch decided to throw in the 42d Division again. It was ordered to break through at Fere Champenoise, but made little progress that night. This attack by the 42d Division is made to appear in many French accounts as the reason for the German withdrawal. As a matter of fact, the German order for withdrawal was issued three hours before the 42d Division started, and the retreat was well under way before the advance of the 42d began to be felt.

The Two IV Armies

During the day the 19th (Saxon) Corps continued in action south of Sompuis, but without the same success as the troops to the west. Joffre had ordered Cury to counter attack by his left wing, so the latter moved a division each from the Colonial and 2d Corps across to the west of the Marne for this purpose.

The attack was made vigorously by the French, but was effectively checked by the Saxons.

In the centre and on the left of the IV German

Army the day was spent in preparing for an attack by the 8th Corps next morning, September 10th.

The III French Army

Sarrail's attitude was one of watchful waiting, except on his left flank, where the recently arrived 15th Corps attacked toward evening and succeeded in advancing. The Germans made a few attacks, but they were not characterized by any particular vigor and were easily beaten off.

Summary

On the Ourcq the crisis had passed, and von Kluck was in retreat; and von Bulow's II Army was also withdrawing. True von Hausen had driven back Foch's right and the armies in the Woevre were bombarding Fort Troyon, but the scales had now tipped to the side of the Allies.

The von Hentsch Incident

This campaign, like Balaklava, had its Nolan, but in this case the officer's name is von Hentsch. Lieutenant Colonel von Hentsch was the intelligence officer of the German Supreme Headquarters, and was sent out on the 8th of September with certain instructions from von Moltke. These instructions were verbal, and considerable doubt has arisen as to exactly what they were. The question at issue is this: Was Colonel von Hentsch to order a withdrawal in the name of Supreme Headquarters if the situation as it appeared to him seemed to warrant it, or was he merely to co-ordinate the retirement, had that retirement already begun? German writers are divided on the subject of what these instructions were. As both principals are dead, probably the question will never be answered satisfactorily to all.

Now, what was von Moltke's mental attitude that caused him to send out von Hentsch and why was von Hentsch and not someone else of higher rank sent?

Von Hentsch was in charge of the Intelligence Division and had been along the front before, in particular on September 5th, when he brought the order to von Kluck that called attention to the threat from Paris.

Von Moltke was completely out of touch with the situation on the right and knew that since the 31st

of August the French were reinforcing their west wing.

Von Kluck and von Bulow had both been calling for help, and doubtless von Hentsch had reported his observation when he got back from his trip of September 5th.

What was more natural than that the officer so recently from the battle front should again go to report the situation. He knew the route and distribution. The fact that a subordinate staff officer was sent indicates that the function to be performed was a staff function and not one of command, for otherwise a higher ranking officer would have been sent. Sometime after the event, Colonel von Hentsch, then in Roumania, requested a court of inquiry to investigate the case. This court was known as the von Hindenburg-von Ludendorf Investigation, and it found the following: "Colonel von Hentsch, at that time Lieutenant Colonel and Chief of Division on the Staff of the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army, received orally from the Chief of the General Staff of the Field Army on September 8th, 1914, at General Headquarters a commission to go to the V to I Armies and to shed light on the situation.¹ In case retreating movements had already been begun on the right wing of the army, he (von Hentsch) was instructed to direct

¹ At this time von Moltke was out of touch with the I and II Armies except by wireless which took about 12 hours to get through.

those in such a way that the gap between the I and II Armies would be closed again, with the I Army in the direction of Soissons, if possible." The question that is most discussed at present is whether or not von Hentsch exceeded his authority in ordering the withdrawal of the I Army.

The von Hindenburg-von Ludendorff report continued: "Lieutenant Colonel von Hentsch was thereby to give binding instructions in the name of General Headquarters in the above contingency. On September 8, 1914, he went to Army Headquarters Nos. 5, 4 and 3, and passed the night of September 8-9, 1914, at Army Headquarters No. 2. The command of the II Army decided independently on the morning of September 9, 1914, to retreat behind the Marne, Lieutenant Colonel von Hentsch agreed to this view and then went on further to the I Army. There, after discussing the situation with the Chief of the General Staff, he gave the order to retreat on the afternoon of September 9, 1914, in the name of General Headquarters and in virtue of the authority invested in him. He was justified in doing this, since the contingency had come which had been foreseen in the instructions given him (the beginning of retreat movements)." "Whether the decision of the command of the II Army and the order to retreat given by Lieutenant Colonel von Hentsch to the command of the I Army was really necessary, in view of the situation, must be decided in later years by research connected with

the history of the war, etc. . . . By direction (signed) Ludendorff."

With regard to the I Army, von Hentsch gave the order to von Kuhl, the chief of staff, outlining the new line on von Kuhl's map. Von Kuhl states in his account that he, Kuhl, then went to see von Kluck for conference, and that von Kluck, with heavy heart, complied with the order. Von Hentsch did not depart until after von Kuhl had returned from this conference. There seems to be nothing in the story that von Hentsch gave the order to von Kuhl, chief of staff, ignoring the commander, for apparently von Kluck had time to see von Hentsch in person if he so desired. Von Dommès later gave the order for the withdrawal of the V Army to von Knobelsdorff, chief of staff for the Imperial Crown Prince, without seeing the latter, which shows that von Hentsch's action was not unusual.

The whole incident appears about as follows:

Von Moltke was out of touch with the army, the right wing in particular, and he knew of the French troop movements in the west, and that his own army was exhausted. Von Hentsch had just returned from his trip to the Assault Wing Armies, so, at the usual morning General Staff Conference at GHQ, at Luxemburg, it was decided to have von Hentsch go back again and look into the situation and report, but that if a rearward movement had been started on the right, he was to co-ordinate it so that the gap between the I and II Armies would

be closed. Acting thereon, von Hentsch went to the V, IV and III Armies and found the situation favorable, and so reported, but upon arriving on the evening of the 8th at the headquarters of the II Army, at Montmort, he found von Bulow and von Lauenstein, his chief of staff, very much "down in the mouth" and depressed by the situation.

Von Bulow had determined that the situation called for a withdrawal, and von Hentsch, being rather pessimistic about a favorable outcome anyway, did not disagree. It must be borne in mind that von Bulow was a field marshal with a reputation for great ability and von Hentsch was a lieutenant colonel. The decision having been made by von Bulow, all there was left for von Hentsch to do was to co-ordinate the withdrawal of the I Army so as to close the gap. The decision having been made, von Hentsch proceeded to Mareuil via Rheims, Fismes, Fere en Tardenois. His trip took all morning, and he encountered great confusion. Trains and transports were withdrawing, and wounded were streaming to the rear. At Brumetz, south of Le Fere, von Hentsch was forced to turn about, on account of the report of the proximity of British cavalry. With this condition before him, and knowing that the II Army was withdrawing, it is small wonder that von Hentsch thought that all there was left for him to do in so far as the I Army was concerned was issue the order for withdrawal, so as to close the gap. He claims he met von Kuhl, chief

of staff for von Kluck, in the village street and the latter exclaimed: "Yes, if the II Army retreats, we can not remain here either." As you will recall, the II Army had radioed its retreat decision over to von Kluck at about 11:45 a. m. and von Hentsch didn't arrive until between noon and 1:00 p. m. Von Kuhl claims that everything was going all right, and that there was no occasion for retreating. It may be that everything was all right west of the Ourcq, where von Quast was enveloping the left of the French VI Army, but east of the Ourcq, the territory through which von Hentsch traveled was a scene of confusion. With the issue of these two orders, the retrograde movement began and the Marne Miracle had been performed.

Summary

The situation at the time the order to retreat was given by von Bulow was about as follows:

German line from right to left:

Von Quast was enveloping the left of Maunoury.

Von der Marwitz, Krawel and the 5th Division were holding back the British on the Crouy-Colombes line—British across the Marne.

A 35-kilometer gap existed between the left of von Kluck and right of von Bulow, but was filled as indicated above.

Von Bulow's right was resting along the Montmirial-Condé Railroad, facing west, and was not hard pressed.

The von Hentsch Incident 169

Von Bulow's center and left were driving back the IX French Army; the left had advanced about 25 kilometers.

The center of the III Army was successful while its right was driving back the IX French Army's right.

Left of the III Army was successful, but was held up by the left of IV French Army south of Sompuis.

The V Army was holding its own, and attacks in the Woevre were gathering success, but were being threatened from the south by French troops from Nancy.

French, left to right:

Maunoury's left was turned, and the retreat order had been issued.

The British and the left of V French Army were across the Marne, and were threatening the left of von Kluck's Army with envelopment.

The right of the V Army was facing east, and was supporting the left of Foch's Army, which had been driven back all along the line with general front northeast; and Joffre had penned the order for its withdrawal.

The left of Cary's IV Army was holding up the attacks towards the south through Sompuis, and reinforcements were coming in at that point from Alsace.

Sarrail's III Army was waiting for an attack

against its center, but was counting on the arrival of the 15th corps from the II Army.

The troops released from Nancy were advancing north along the Woevre and were threatening the left flank of the 5th German Corps, attacking the forts on the Woevre Heights.

Corollary

The consensus of opinion among the German commanders seems to be that the retreat was premature and that the various actions, had they been allowed to continue to a conclusion, would have turned out well in the end, and the Battle of the Marne would have been a German triumph.

The Retreat

The I German Army withdrew without much difficulty, the right wing of the fighting force north through Crepy, the center to the northwest of the Ourcq, while the left retired across the river, then fell back northward behind its east and west course. Von der Marwitz and the Krawel Brigade covered the withdrawal, but were not pushed. By the night of September 10th the I Army was on the line Crepy-La Ferte Milon,—the Upper Ourcq. It then fell back and crossed the Aisne west of Soissons. The British and left of the V French Army, on September 10th, pushed forward to Fere en Tardenois and advance groups threatened the road to Soissons, but were held in check by the 5th German Division. The pursuit, for the purpose of overtaking the Germans, was not vigorously executed in so far as the British were concerned. At 3:55 p. m., on September 10th, the command of the I Army was subordinated a second time to that of the II Army. The II Army, with its trains in the lead, retired at first behind the Marne and then behind the Vesle. The 13th Division of the 7th Corps protected the crossing of the Marne, and was the only force attacked with any degree of vigor.

The III Army received the order for retreat with amazement. It had driven back the French over 20 kilometers and nothing had transpired in its

front to warrant such a movement. The order to the left wing was received at 7:00 p. m., but later was revoked in so far as the 19th Corps was concerned, and the latter was directed to be ready to support the daylight attack next morning, September 10th, by the 8th Corps, IV Army. On the right of the III Army, von Kirchback delayed obeying the order from von Bulow until late in the afternoon, and not until it was confirmed. He began withdrawing at 4:30 p. m. The withdrawal of the 32d Division on the right of the von Kirchback group was made imperative by the withdrawal of the 2d Guards under von Plettenberg.

At 10 p. m., September 9th, the III Army received wireless orders from GHQ that it was to remain south of Chalons and support the attack of the V Army, in which the IV Army was to participate.

On September 10th the German attack was made, with considerable success, but French reinforcements coming up, the attack was checked, the Germans dropping back on the defensive and stopping the French.

On the night of September 10th word was received of the withdrawal of the II Army back of the Vesle, so orders were sent to the III Army directing it to cross the Marne and take position back of the Vesle to the left of the II Army.

The IV Army withdrew on the morning of September 11th. Neither the III nor IV Armies were very vigorously pursued by the French. The V

Army carried out partial attacks on its front while its 5th Corps, in the Woevre, continued its advance. Finally, on September 12th, pursuant to orders brought by Colonel von Dommès, the V Army withdrew, not being pursued at all. As early as September 8th, Joffre had issued orders for the abandonment of Verdun, which Sarraill ignored, being finally rewarded by the withdrawal of the V German Army to the north of the St. Meneshould-Argonne line. Had the Crown Prince continued his attacks with vigor on September 10th or 11th, there is no question but what Verdun would have been cut off and a junction been formed by the V German Army and its 5th Corps attacking Fort Troyon and the other forts in the vicinity.

Conclusion and Final Comments

It must have been apparent as the reader followed the movements in the text wherein the greatest weakness of the German Army lay. It was with the High Command. Von Moltke attempted to handle not only the operations on all fronts in general, but those on the West Front in detail. To have done the latter, it would have been necessary that he establish himself at some point where he could keep in close touch and feel the pulse of the Western Army, and direct its action.

The following is one of the most glaring illustrations of defective command. Von Moltke, in his orders, repeatedly refers to the main movement as "through Belgium and Luxemburg into France," and then, at the most critical time, withdraws two corps from that flank and starts them to the East Front and withdraws other corps from the same flank later. His entire attitude shows that he either did not know or did not appreciate the efficacy of that Napoleonic doctrine of singleness of lines of operation, which is nothing more than stating in other words "one should do but one thing at a time." If his main movement was through Belgium and Luxemburg, why didn't he back it to the limit?

Von Ludendorff says in an article in "The Army Quarterly" for October, 1921: "If he had not sent the Guard Reserve Corps and the 11th Corps to

East Prussia, all would have gone well. If he wished to send something, he should have taken the corps from the left wing."

Thus again, "Leadership."

However, there are two angles from which to view this weakening of the right wing. Von Moltke may have considered it of lesser importance than the left wing and yet again he may have estimated, after the receipt of von Bulow's very optimistic message reporting the enemy's flight after the capture of the Sambre Line, that the right wing had finished its task and consequently could spare the troops better than the left wing. As one reads and studies this campaign from the German viewpoint, one must be impressed with the fact that the trouble was vacillation in high command as a result of lack of information, that in turn being the result of poor liaison.

The Supreme Command did not keep in touch with the various armies, due to the defects of radio and telegraph; but the failure of these agencies cannot be held solely responsible, for had the Post of Command gone where von Bernhardi says it should go—"Near the point where the decision is to be secured"—defective liaison would not have mattered so much. Von Moltke, although nominally Chief of the Great General Staff, was, in fact, the Commander of the Army, for nearly all German writers agree that the Kaiser did not interfere very much but, metaphorically speaking, signing on the dotted line. It is too

much to say that von Moltke was to blame for the defeat, for no one man was. The defeat was the result of the German system which made it almost impossible for a man with a mind of his own to rise very high in the estimation of the Kaiser. We might well consider what would have happened had von Ludendorff been in command on the West Front, with von Hindenburg on the East Front and the Supreme Command at some central point co-ordinating the efforts on these two Fronts. Added to this, had some strong character, such as von Mackensen, been in command of Armies I, II, and III as a group, with von Eichorn in command of the IV and V Armies, and another strong character in command of the VI and VII Armies; doubtless the story of the Marne campaign would have been different.

The Germans were followers of the doctrine of the elder von Moltke of concentration on the battlefield. This form of concentration had been carried out successfully by the elder von Moltke at Koniggratz and subsequent to that time it had been the studied thought of the German Army. Von der Goltz, in his "Conduct of War," points out the great weakness of this form of a concentration. He says in substance that it should not be attempted unless one has good troops, competent leaders who will act promptly and in harmony with the ideas of the Supreme Commander. The great danger is that the subordinate commanders will get out of touch with

the Supreme Command and act in a manner that will defeat the main object. The elder von Moltke brought about a "Cannae" with this form of a concentration at Koniggratz, but it will be recalled that even then he had to hasten from Berlin to the army of Prince Frederick Charles, emerging from Saxony, that was about to withdraw, not being able to establish touch with the army of the Crown Prince. With a concentration such as will result in a "Cannae," the Supreme Command must keep in touch with the various columns and direct their efforts toward the common objective. This purpose cannot be accomplished by allowing these various commanders to arrange it themselves, as was done on the Sambre.

The Germans evolved a plan for this war which was vitally defective, in that it attempted to regulate the movements after the initial contact with the enemy. As it appears, the German General Staff had war-gamed this plan so often and had studied it so much that it thought that all that was necessary was to start the ball rolling and the machine would function automatically. In this the General Staff was doomed to disappointment, and the German Army like all highly developed machines when once out of order was very difficult to repair.

The German Army was greatly handicapped by lack of railroads in the invaded territory. The rail movements of the concentration of the German Army were completed on the 16th of August and

worked without the slightest hitch. Subsequent to that time, however, due to the very effective demolition by both the Belgian and the French, railroad transportation became very difficult, and south of the Sambre River nearly all transportation had to be motor or animal drawn until the fall of Maubeuge on the 7th of September, and the repair of the railroad bridge at Namur. The German system of handling trains known as the system of deflection, failed badly. This system provides for a group of highly trained railroad experts to be stationed at various points to head off trains by telegraph and shunt them to points where needed. The great defect is that should a train get past the point to which the telegram is sent it is apt to cause great confusion before it can be headed off. The French system, on the other hand, worked to perfection. Their system provides for the establishing of regulating stations well to the rear to which both troops and supplies can be sent, to be transshipped to the point where most needed. The regulating station is nothing more than a railroad yard with a competent group of men to operate it. As the Army retired, regulating stations were selected farther and farther to the rear and were not interfered with by the enemy. It is not too much to say that the railroads contributed as much to the winning of the Battle of the Marne as any other one thing.

A representative of the Pennsylvania Railroad who happened to be in France at the time of mob-

ilization, said that there was a complete absence of confusion and had it not been for the sight of soldiers in uniform one would not have known that a mobilization and concentration was going on.

The following are some of the specific reasons for failure that developed during the course of the campaign; and while this list is quite extensive, it is believed that the causes given therein would not have been sufficient to have wrecked the campaign had the Army been properly commanded. We might say they merely magnified the consequences of defeat.

Failure to organize the Assault Wing into a Group and to place a competent commander over it.

Placing of von Kluck's Army under command of von Bulow, Commander-in-Chief of the II Army at the eleventh hour, thereby making the I Army in reality a right flank guard of the II Army.

Withdrawal of the Guard Reserve Corps and 11th Corps from the Assault Wing after Namur and attempting to send them to the Russian front. (Rail transport was not available at Aix-la-Chapelle for four days.) If von Moltke was determined to send two corps from the right wing why didn't he substitute the 9th Reserve Corps that was coming in from Schleswig-Holstein in place of either the Guard Reserve Corps or the 11th Corps?

Withdrawal of the V Corps to Diedenhofen for service on the East front thereby weakening the V Army at a critical time. (The V Corps consumed

five days going to, remaining at, and returning from Diedenhofen.)

Permitting the III Army to be turned from its strategical march direct southwest, on August 24th, to the west in order to support the tactical attack of the left wing of the II Army.

Failure to permanently attach Independent Cavalry Corps No. 2 to the I Army and keeping it so attached.

Subordinating the I Army to the Command of the II Army, and ordering the II and III Armies to establish liaison for the first battles on the Sambre, instead of directing their actions from G.H.Q.

Improper use of cavalry—(a) Needless attack by Independent Cavalry Corps No. 2 on the Belgian Army on the Gette. (b) Needless attack of Independent Cavalry Corps No. 1 on Dinant. (c) After having assigned Independent Cavalry Corps No. 1 to the task of covering the front of the II and III Armies and, after the aviators had reported the gap between the left of the IV and the right of the V French Armies, ordering this cavalry around to the north of Namur, thereby keeping it out of action at a critical time. (d) Sending Independent Cavalry Corps No. 2 on a bootless reconnaissance to locate the British and failing to release it to the I Army in time for it to get back and participate in the Battles of Mons and Le Cateau in a fresh condition.

Failure to call a day of rest on the Aisne River.

G.H.Q. remaining too far away from the front of main issue and not keeping up effective liaison.

Failure to switch the VII Army from the left to the right flank promptly enough to assist in the decisive battle of the Assault Wing.

Failure to assign 9th Army Corps to von Kluck at the outset.

Failure to make provisions for replacing the losses, which should have been anticipated as a result of forced marches and repeated engagements. It is said that the German units arrived on the Marne with only about 50 per cent of their original strength.

The use of first line troops to assist in the investment of fortresses instead of using second line troops for that purpose.

Failure to provide for the grouping of armies before D day and H hour, so that the efforts within respective wings could be coordinated.

Failure of the ammunition supply.

Failure to utilize the services of the navy to prevent the arrival of the British Expeditionary Forces.

Defective radio and wire systems.

After the disappearance of the French troops at Amiens, not showing more concern about their whereabouts nor echeloning against their possible reappearance to the west.

Failure of von Kluck to properly evaluate the

importance of the following extract in the General Headquarters Order, "the protection of the flank of the Armies."

The custom in the Germany Army of a Chief of Staff being jointly responsible with the Commander, thereby creating a double headed authority. Had it not been for this fact, it is to be gravely doubted whether General of Infantry von Kuhl, Chief of Staff of the I Army, would have accepted the orders of von Hentsch without first consulting with von Kluck. Or would the Chief of Staff of the V Army have accepted Colonel von Dommes's order to retreat without consulting his Commander in Chief, the Crown Prince.

Failure to mobilize the Landstrum earlier than the latter part of August.

Superiority of the French 75-mm. field gun over the German field gun.

Principles of War

The Principle of Cooperation was misapplied by von Moltke—he attempted to get cooperation by leaving the various commanders alone. In their attempt to cooperate on several occasions, they forgot their missions. Cooperation can never replace unity of command.

Von Moltke violated the Principle of the Objective most flagrantly. He decided that the Allied Army on the West Front was the main objective, and then at a critical moment detached three corps

and a cavalry division for service on the East front.

In applying the Principle of the Objective insofar as it obtained to the Western Army, von Moltke did not pick out one particular point as the decisive one throwing his mass in that direction. He changed from time to time as the situation developed, first throwing his centre of gravity to the left and then to the right and keeping the process up.

He violated the Principle of Economy of Force by taking the three corps away from the Assault Wing. Also he left superior forces on his left to be contained by inferior French troops instead of shipping them around to the right where their superiority could be felt.

The Independent Cavalry Corps No. 1 covering the front of the III Army was withdrawn from its position on the Meuse and dispatched around to the north of Namur to enter the line in front of the II Army in violation of the above principle. While this corps may not have been in the best place, the withdrawing of it kept it out of the critical part of the fighting on the Sambre and Meuse.

Von Moltke violated the Principle of Mass in not keeping a Mass Maneuver in rear of his maneuver wing, the right or at least replacements. It had been contemplated in the von Schlieffen Plan to have the six Ersatz Divisions (17 Brigades) in rear of the right. Von Moltke had them in rear of the

left and when they were sent to the right, it was too late. Von Moltke's reason for not having a stronger right was his fear in regard to supply.

Cavalry

With reference to the German Cavalry, it is believed that it was not used to the best advantage. Its screening functions up until August 18th were admirably performed. Its strategic functions were not so well executed. The tactical battle on the Gette and at Dinant caused losses without compensating advantages.

The German Cavalry does not seem to have advanced much since 1870 in battle tactics if one is to judge from its actions in the preliminary combats. Possibly in its mind it had before it the picture of von Bredow's Brigade charging at Vionville, on August 16th, 1870, and thought that the wild charge against infantry was still its major battlefield function.

Wild charges make a fine theme for the poet, the painter and the sculptors but as a method of tactical movement against unbroken infantry on the modern battlefield they are about as effective as would be the mass of flags and unearthly howls of the Ancient Oriental. Year after year at the German Imperial Maneuvers, whole divisions and corps of cavalry made most imposing mass attacks in a spectacular manner before the eyes of their admiring Emperor and apparently von der Marwitz and

von Richthofen got the idea that that was the correct way for cavalry to function.

At all events one gets that impression if one studies the cavalry attacks at Haelen, Dinant, La Garde, and other places where the first cavalry fighting occurred.

It would have been better to have massed the cavalry in a large body, after deducting the necessary tactical groups, and then to have held that mass in rear of the right wing to be thrown forward as soon as the general advance had started. A force of this kind could have cut the Belgians off from Antwerp, if that was desired, and could have sought out the British and located the flank of the Allied Army.

Organizationally it was wrong to make Cavalry Corps No. 2, independent of von Kluck and then, at the last moment, to place it under the command of von Kluck. This cavalry corps should have kept in touch with the flank of von Kluck's Army, and should have voluntarily closed in on the flank of his army as soon as contact with the main British forces was established. The attack of Independent Cavalry Corps No. 1, against Dinant was without purpose, for the aviators had already made maps showing the continuous line south as far as Givet. These aviators had also located the gap between the right of the French V Army and left of the French IV Army into which gap this cavalry corps might have been sent had it not been ordered

to the north of the Sambre to swing around and get in front of the II Army. It has been suggested that the whole cavalry force might have been used on the East Front from the outset to make a strong demonstration towards Warsaw with a view of holding up the Russians and then have been quickly switched to the West Front in time for the advance which did not begin until August 18th. It is difficult to understand how the Independent Cavalry Corps was surprised by infantry north of Amiens if it was paying any attention to its security.

The action of von der Marwitz's 2d Cavalry Corps in holding back the British Army south of the Marne was as fine a piece of covering action and rear-guard work as history records. His action shows the wonderful screening and delaying properties of the machine gun and modern rifle; he had two cavalry divisions and five Jager Battalions. This cavalry held Sir John French south of the Marne for three days and after crossing the river, being reenforced by the 5th Division and the Krawel Brigade, could probably have stopped the British further advance.

The French cavalry reconnaissance work was most defective. Sordet's did not discover anything on his reconnaissance towards Liege nor to the east from Dinant although German Armies were concentrating not far away.

Sordet did assist the British after Le Cateau but before that time his corps was too badly blown

and fatigued according to the statement of Sordet, to be of any assistance.¹

On the battlefield the French cavalry did not play a very important part although it had ample opportunity. It is true that the 5th Division did get around in rear of von Kluck from the north but was easily driven off.

It seems that the British cavalry division fully justified itself if any mounted men ever did. It did not hesitate to sacrifice itself on all occasions, and to it may be paid the most lasting tribute for its efficiency, self-sacrifice and daring.

Aviation

Aviation, particularly on the German side, seemed to have played its part particularly well in reconnaissance, but it is not clear that the information so received was always acted upon.

German aviators located the gap in the French line toward Givet before mentioned and dropped maps, but apparently no particular attention was paid to it. One piece of information obtained by the German aviators was in regard to the advance of the five columns between the right of von Bulow and left of von Kluck—this information cinched von Bulow's determination to fall back.

¹ A French Cavalry officer who was with Sordet's Corps said to the author: "I was with Sordet during these days—the horses were dead from exhaustion. The odor when marching at the rear of the column was worse than any battlefield. The horses were rotting to pieces."

The French aviators reported the withdrawal of von Kluck and von Bulow, and it is strange that a vigorous pursuit was not pressed, unless it was that the French army itself was used up.

The Germans used their Zeppelins, but without much success, as a result of the fact that they did not seem to know their appropriate tactical use. "They had three of these ships—the Z-VI was badly damaged over Liege and had to put back to Boon, where it was dismantled; Z-VIII was used in pursuit of the French through the Vosges, but was badly damaged by hostile fire, so much so that it came down and was temporarily in the hands of the enemy; Z-IX, after bombing some of the Channel ports, had to put back and over Brussels came near being brought down as a result of engine trouble. It finally reached its home port, Dusseldorf, where it fell a victim to a British aviator."

Artillery

In one thing in particular the French outclassed the Germans, and that was in field artillery. The French 75 mm. was far better than the German gun. The maximum range of the French gun was 6,800 meters as opposed to 5,600 of the Germans. And the accuracy of the French gun at the maximum range of the German gun was five times greater. The effect in depth of the French shrapnel was greater. The explosive charge of the French shell produced greater effect. The German heavies bal-

anced this disparity whenever used. But the skillful use of the French 75s had more to do with defeating the Germans than anything else. The French 75s would open up unexpectedly from a woods or other cover, causing the Germans to deploy, when they would withdraw to repeat the performance again and again. The army of von Hausen was held up wholly or in part on about seventy different occasions by demonstrations of this kind. It may be summed up as follows: "The superior German infantry could not accomplish its task on account of the lack of artillery support and the inferior French infantry was saved from collapse by the artillery."³

Infantry

Too much cannot be said about the German infantry. It performed prodigies in marching. It suffered terrific losses, particularly among the officers.

The total losses during the campaign was three-fifths of the initial strength.

Enough has been said already about the command of the respective armies.

Even though the French Plan 17 provided for an offensive, it does seem as if Joffre, in the back of his head, knew full well that he would have to and should assume the defensive. Michel, his predecessor, had favored a defensive and had gotten his

³ Baumgarten-Crusius.

congé, so Joffre, in order to retain his position, had to meet the demand of the younger element for the offensive à l'outrance. After the failures in Lorraine, he quickly recovered himself and then carried into execution the move that Michel had sacrificed his official head by suggesting. As a proof that the Allies were about as badly exhausted by their victory as the Germans were by their defeat, one need but refer to their failure to vigorously pursue. The V and IX Armies pushed themselves forward, the left of the V Army the more vigorously. The other armies seemed too dazed to follow. Joffre seemed to handle the situation tactically quite well, but it is not understood why he didn't make Maunoury's VI Army stronger, even at the expense of the V Army, and why he did not delay the advance until the VI Army was thoroughly assembled.

The question so often asked is, why did Germany fail? After forty-four years of preparation, it would seem if there were anything in preparedness Germany should have won hands down. We find our answer in the words, "Germany thought she was prepared, but really was not." The following are a few items indicating her unpreparedness: No provision had been made for ammunition supply, though demands for it had been made by the General Staff; the French 75 mm. gun was better than the German gun and this was known by the Government, yet no attempts had been made to perfect a better German field gun; from 1909 to 1913 three

new corps had been asked for, but nothing was done, the General Staff being told, time after time, that if they "insist on such demands, we are on the verge of national bankruptcy or a revolution;" contrary to the generally accepted idea, only about 50 per cent of Germany's population was trained.

We have in all this an illustration of the violation of the Principle of Mass from the superiority viewpoint. If we rely upon superiority, then that superiority must be real, not imaginary.

We must expect war, and when it comes we should find ourselves in such a condition as to bring about a successful conclusion in as short a time as possible; and this can only be accomplished by viewing our military condition every day exactly as it is; looking facts squarely in the face; and not attempting to make ourselves believe we are strong where we are weak. Germany did not do this. No one was allowed to investigate; no one was allowed to remark, write, or point out defects contrary to the wishes of the All Highest and which might shock his vanity.

Viewed in the retrospect, what must be the feelings of the various German commanders when they realize that the campaign might have been won.⁴ Much of the bitterness is taken out of defeat when

⁴ "Only little by little did French and English reports call our attention to the fact that at that time the German Army was standing on the threshold of a great success, but did not find the key to open the door of victory."—Von Francois.

it is realized that all was done that could have been done, but when the bitterness of that defeat is aggravated by the thoughts and realization of lost opportunities, the conscience with difficulty finds relief.

“The moving finger writes, and having writ
 moves on;
 Nor all your piety nor wit
 Can lure it back to cancel half a line;
 Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.”

The outcome of this campaign seems to have been influenced by inexorable fate. It was a miracle on one side and a tragedy on the other. And what must Wilhelm II think as he ruminates in his exile on past events and grows to a consciousness of the fact that had he been less egotistical and arrogant, and had he invited, yes, welcomed suggestions and advice, he might today still be one of the leading, if not the leading, figure in the political world; but all his glory is gone, such is the ephemeral nature of fame.

Sic transit gloria mundi.

A Few Good Books

That should be included in every military library

American Campaigns—STEELE

Set, \$10.00

Prepared originally for students at Army Service Schools for their course in Military History. The one book, 2 volumes (text and maps) that contains the military activities of the nation up to and including the Spanish-American War. Handsomely bound.

Mass Physical Training—RAYCROFT

\$5.00

Approved by the War Plans Division General Staff. "Contents forms the basis for the training and instruction of the military service of the United States in Physical Training." Extract from foreword by Major-General Haan, chief of War Plans Division. Profusely illustrated. Chapters on the tactics of baseball, football, and basketball that are the best that have ever been produced.

Thirty-Minute Talks—STEWART-WALDRON

\$2.50

A collection of twenty every-day talks on military subjects in language that the man new to the service can understand. These talks will serve to keep you in touch with the "Military Game"—they will save you a lot of time "brushing up" when called upon for a talk on a military subject.

Employment of Machine Guns—SHORT

\$3.50

The first comprehensive study of American machine gun tactics as developed in the World War. The only machine gunners' text-book based on the present tables of organization. Shows the machine gunner how he must support the rifleman. Illustrated with fine maps.

Army Regulations (Up-to-Date)

\$3.00

Contains the pamphlets of the New Army Regulations and all the paragraphs of the old Army Regulations, corrected up to date, that are of interest to the individual officer or the administration of the unit with which he is on duty.

A complete index makes all of this material readily available when you need it. Cloth bound, 600 pages. Sold with our ironclad guarantee of satisfaction.

Defense of Duffer's Drift—SWINTON

.50

An interesting story of the Boer War that brings out and illustrates the principles of minor tactics.

Battle of Booby's Bluffs—LIST .75

A companion book to "The Defense of Duffer's Drift." Deals with the operations of a Battalion of Infantry in combat. Interesting and instructive. Endorsed by many of the leading officers of the Army.

Terrain Exercises—WALDRON \$2.50

The book that sets forth in detail the up-to-date method of training in Infantry minor tactics. Model problems prepared that may be fitted to any terrain that may be available. The discussions, explanations and solutions bring out the principles of minor tactics. Will save many hours of preparation in the conduct of terrain exercises.

Reserve Officers' Examiner \$2.00

Complete text of the five subjects included in the basic examination of officers for promotion—Administration, Military Law, Military Courtesy and Customs of the Service, Field Service Regulations, Military Hygiene. Based on S. R. 43. Text arranged in convenient question and answer form.

Scout's Handbook .60

The most complete book in print covering the subject. Profusely illustrated. Tells you what to do and how to do it, in language you can understand.

Minor Tactics \$1.25

A reprint of the map problems in Minor Tactics that have appeared in the Reserve Officers' Department of the INFANTRY JOURNAL from time to time. These problems were prepared at The Infantry School, Camp Benning, Ga., and represent the most up-to-date thought on the subjects. Paper bound.

Scouting and Patrolling—WALDRON .75

A little book that tells in language the soldier can understand, how a scout goes about his work as an individual and how the operations of a patrol are conducted. Endorsed by leading officers of the Army. Revised and brought up to date to include the experiences of the World War.

**U. S. Infantry Association
Washington, D. C.**

The Marne Miracle

By

Col. W. K. Naylor, G. S.

Price \$1.50

An American analysis of the Battle of the Marne (1914) and the campaign leading up to that decisive conflict.

Why do the French refer to this campaign as a Miracle? Why do the Germans refer to it as a tragedy?

Was Germany prepared for the World War?

What were the plans of France for the war with Germany—offensive or defensive?

Did the stand of the Belgians at Liege save France?

Who was responsible for the withdrawal of the German Armies?

Why did Germany lose the Battle of the Marne?

All of these mooted questions and many more are answered.

U. S. Infantry Association
Washington, D. C.





DOBBS BROS.
LIBRARY BINDING

DEC 78

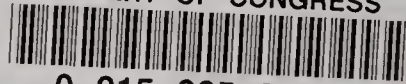
ST. AUGUSTINE

FLA.



32084

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 015 865 241 9